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1) Introduction

Equal opportunities for women in our society are still a frequently discussed topic. Female roles have significantly changed over the last decades. Nevertheless, women’s positions are far away from being completely equal to men. Characters of popular TV series are perfect illustrations of such inequalities. A huge audience gets influenced by the broad amount of different soaps and series, because it is hardly possible to avoid the TV-program. Each of series contains of at least one woman whose role seems to be independent, strong, powerful and superior to many men around them. The example of Cersei, portrayed by Lena Headey, in the successful TV-series Game of Thrones (2012- ) is a classic female role, which is most certainly not presented in a weak or insecure way. Gemma from Sons of Anarchy (2008-2014), played by Katey Sagal and Fiona, portrayed by Jessica Lange, in the TV-series American Horror Story: Coven (2013), are similar to the role of Cersei and therefore presented strong too.

The three mentioned characters know how to fight and protect what is precious to them. In order to illustrate how women are presented strong in popular TV-series, it is necessary to use the methodology of ‘mise-en-scène’ analysis. In great detail, it has to be analyzed how the roles are filmed, before the scenes are interpreted afterwards. The way characters are presented the first time, how they enter the room, whether low or high camera angles are used, and even the props, colors and the clothes they wear, create the way we perceive them. Besides, in order to highlight their domination on screen, using ‘fear’ emphasizes their humiliation of other characters. A frightening appearance makes Cersei, Gemma and Fiona even more intimidating and puts them (seemingly) in the superior position. Every shot plays an important part in the creation.

After it has been proved why the audience is convinced of their powerfulness by what they literally see on screen, it is important to go beyond the camera angles and shots. The audience might think they are invulnerable, but they are not, especially on the narrative level. All of them are wives. All of them are mothers. All of them are women. Although they are presented powerful, they are not. Having a closer look at the roles and their background, will prove that it is still impossible for women not to be in the inferior position in contrast to men. Although film studios create the illusion of strong and independent women, their problems show that they are actually weak
and discriminated. Stereotypically female representation undermines their equality to their male counterparts. Moreover, they have to fight for their beloved ones, their positions, their husbands, attention and – one of their greatest weak points – their children. Motherhood is a concept, which is still full of traditional stereotypes, and since Cersei, Gemma and Fiona are mothers, it is one of their biggest discriminative factors. Finally, their embodied performances on screen are stereotypically female and although on screen they appear strong, there is a lack of directness and too much restraint to be found in the way they perform.

All we see is an illusion of powerful women and it is therefore important to have a closer look at what we see on screen and reflect on what we have actually seen by taking the whole context into consideration, in order to get aware of the weakness of even strong, independent and forceful presented female roles.

2) Visual Level

The first part of this thesis is about the visual level and deals with all kinds of elements, which can be seen on screen. The chapter starts with the explanation of the term ‘mise-en-scène’, because it is the technique, which is used for the analyses and interpretations. The single elements and their combinations can create a lot of meaning. Afterwards, there will be a variety of definitions of the term ‘power’, since certain techniques of ‘mise-en-scène’ lead to the impression of powerful appearances. Dependent on the context, ‘power’ can be defined differently. The term appears in the field of philosophy, physics and many others. In this thesis, the focus will be on definitions of the field of communication studies, because in the following scenes, power is exercised by the characters through communication on screen – both between different characters and between the characters and the audience. The thesis continues with very detailed analyses and interpretations of several scenes, which give examples of how female roles appear powerful – the reason why the previously given definitions of the term are necessary. Although I am going to illustrate the exact opposite by having a look on the narrative level in later chapters – because women are still not equally treated like their male counterparts and can not be entirely powerful – I delib-
erately want to show how directors at least create the visual impression of strong women who are in superior positions.

2.1) Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation

In order to be able to understand the following analyses and interpretations of scenes from characters of Game of Thrones (2012- ), Sons of Anarchy (2008-2014) and American Horror Story: Coven (2013), it is important to introduce the methodology which is going to be used in this thesis: Mise-en-scène. John Gibbs offers a workable definition in his book Mise-en-scène: Film style and Interpretation (2002) about this particular technique of film style and interpretation:

‘Mise-en-scène’ is used in film studies in the discussion of visual style. The word is from the French, although it has been employed in English since at least 1833, and has its origins in the theatre. Literally translated it means ‘put on stage’, but figurative uses of the term have a long history. For the student of film, a useful definition might be: ‘the contents of the frame and the way that they are organized’. Both halves of this formulation are significant – the contents and their organization. (Gibbs 2002: 5)

Manfred Pfister explains in his work Das Drama – Theorie und Analyse the following:

Während im Drama innerhalb eines gewählten szenischen Ausschnittes die raum-zeitliche Kontinuität und Homogenität durch das Medium festgelegt ist, kann im Film jede einzelne Einstellung im bezug auf Einstellungsgröße, Einstellungsperspektive, Einstellungskonjunktion (Schnitt, Überblende usw.), Belichtung und Kamerabewegung variiert werden. […] Der Betrachter eines Films wie der Leser eines narrative Textes wird nicht, wie im Drama, mit dem Dargestellten unmittelbar konfrontiert, sondern über eine perspektivierende, selektierende, akzentuierende und gliedernde Vermittlungsinstanz – die Kamera bzw. den Erzähler. (Pfister 2001: 47-48)

Directors can decide on what they want to fore- and background and the contents of the frame include a lot of different elements. Both lighting, the costumes, properties of the set, décor or the actors and actresses themselves are important and have to be taken into consideration. Moreover, the organization of these elements has a special
purpose and does not happen accidentally. It “encompasses the relationship of the actors to one another and to the décor, but also their relationship to the camera, and thus audience’s view” (Gibbs 2002: 5). Mise-en-scène is not just talking about the framing, but also about camera movement. Photographic decisions or special lenses, which are employed, offer the audience not just elements to see, but also different ways how to see them. (Gibbs 2002: 5-6)

Mise-en-scène offers ten features, which can be analyzed and later interpreted. Although this thesis will not be restricted to visuals, but also spoken texts of the TV-series, which additionally let the three female roles appear powerful and strong, there will be a focus on what the audience actually sees and how certain actresses, props or their interaction is presented. Therefore, the ten features are explained shortly, in order to demonstrate the range of creative alternatives available to directors. Without going into greater detail, one or two examples of the three mentioned series will present what is explicitly meant by the stated element.

The first element of mise-en-scène is lightning. It is the director’s deliberate decision whether he/she lights places or characters, or whether he/she lets them in the dark. Light has an impact on the audience, because it is literally responsible for making things or people visible. Moreover, it tells the audience where to look at, because viewers will automatically focus on the light parts. “The organization of light, actors and camera makes possible a series of suggestive readings” (Gibbs 2002: 6). Letting elements, especially actors or actresses, in the dark, creates suspense and makes them mysterious or even threatening.

The second element is a role’s costume, which carries a lot of significant meaning. They tell a lot about the characters and show where they belong to. Apart from uniforms, which are the most obvious way to put information into clothes, costumes may lead to certain assumption about a role’s position or attitude. Taking off certain clothes can also have an effect, as well as the complete changing of a characters style. The most important function of costumes in Game of Thrones (2012- ), Sons of Anarchy (2008-2014) or American Horror Story: Coven (2013) is to emphasize the characters’ belonging.

Cersei from Game of Thrones (2012- ), for instance, is always dressed in expensive, pompous, medieval robes. They are like all dresses, worn by prestigious women of King’s Landing and show immediately where Cersei comes from (Image 1). Moreover, her hair is styled in a way in order to underline her status and
hometown. The costumes differ and help the audience to classify where the specific character comes from. When Cersei, in season 1 of the series, decides to marry her son off to Sansa, daughter of house Stark, she encourages her to wear dresses like the ladies of King’s Landing, in order to emphasize the fact that Sansa is no longer one of the Starks of Winterfell, but a family member of the Lannisters in the south.

Gemma from *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-2014), for example, is not an equal member of the gang, which, among other factors, is shown by the simple fact that she is not allowed to wear the representative jacket all the others are wearing. By contrast, Fiona from *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013) wears, together with all her inferior witches of the coven, black clothes, in order to highlight their solidarity (Image 2). Costumes carry a lot of meaning in themselves but are very often combined with the next feature of mise-en-scène: colors.

“Colour is an important expressive element for film-makers, and is often mobilized by means of costume, which has the advantage of a direct association with a particular character. It might equally, however, be a feature of the lightning, the set, decoration, or particular props.” (Gibbs 2002: 8) As in the mentioned example of *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013), the color black is an important indicator for the witches and the coven. By wearing the black clothes they show where they belong to and, moreover, put an emphasis on the difference to their enemies, the witches who use voodoo and wear very colorful and unusual costumes. In *Game of Thrones* (2012- ), colors are incredibly helpful for the audience. Since the series has many different settings, because the world of Westeros is very big and various, the colors help the
viewers to recognize where the story takes place. In Kings Landing, for example, the lightning is orange and warm colors dominate (Image 3), whereas the lightning of Winterfell in the north is blue and cold colors are used (Image 4). Without any characters stating where they are at the moment, the audience can distinguish between the places just by seeing the colors. The colors of the banners of the different houses go along with the coloring of the lightning. Besides, the whole décor underlines this and adding colors, which actually do not belong to a specific setting, can have an effect and draws the viewer’s attention to it.

Meaning can also be carried through small elements on screen and are not just to be found in whole locations or big settings. Even small objects have additional meaning and influence situations. Therefore, props are the fourth feature of mise-en-scène. Andrew Klevan claims in his book Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film that certain objects in the film “collect meanings through repeated usage, and develop associations throughout the narrative” (Klevan 2000: 146). This can be a particular household object, a weapon or a necklace – depending on the story and the context.

According to Gibbs, the fifth element of mise-en-scène is the décor. Film-makers do not randomly choose it, because it will have an impact and influence on the situation too. It can highlight a characters personality or irritate the audience, because they have expected a different setting. The arrangement of open space, doors, windows or chairs can carry meaning. An entrance hall, for example, offers a lot of space and can, by arranging the camera correctly, turn the whole space into a theatrical area. Contrasts can be created by highlighting the differences of a certain character and his/her décor. (Gibbs 2002: 11) Gemma from Sons of Anarchy (2008-2014) is surrounded by stereotypical male décor of the motorcycle-club called ‘SAMCRO’. The
garage, full of motorcycles and male stereotypes are probably nothing a wider audi-
ence would connote with a woman. Nevertheless, she is able to assert herself in this
unusual setting for a woman. By placing her in her small, crowded and separated of-
fice most of the time, they mark her territory, which is excluded from the men’s, alt-
ough it is on the same ground and in the same building.

Static elements, such as décor, props or clothes are not the only features of
mise-en-scène. Actions and performances are as important as the previous explained
ones and are therefore the sixth element.

At an important base level, mise-en-scène is concerned with the action and the
significance it might have. Whilst thinking about décor, lighting and the use
of color, we should not forget how much can be expressed through the direc-
tion of action and through skillful performance. A very great deal of signif-
icance can be bound up in the way in which a line is delivered, or where an ac-
tor is looking at a particular moment. (Gibbs 2002: 12)

Action and performance is one of the most important parts of mise-en-scène and go-
ing to be one of the key elements of the analysis and interpretation of scenes of this
thesis. A certain gaze, a particular move or even a short stagnation can create an
amount of meanings. Every action can add a different perspective to an event. In the
first part of this thesis, it will be proven how certain actions and performances of Cer-
sei, Gemma and Fiona of the three mentioned TV-series let them appear powerful and
superior. For now, the seventh element of mise-en-scène will be explained: space.

Space can be seen as “a vital expressive element at a film-maker’s disposal”
(Gibbs 2002: 17). “In thinking about space we might include the personal space be-
tween performers and our sense of when it is impinged upon, but also ‘blocking’, that
is, the relationships expressed and patterns created in the positioning of the actors.”
(Gibbs 2002: 17) Depending on where a character is positioned and where space is
widened or narrowed, again, meaning is created. It makes a significant difference,
whether one single character stands alone while two others stand together on literally
the other side. Without claiming that there may be a conflict, the space in between
makes this obvious or at least highlights and dramatizes it. Taking one others space
but entering it is another example of how important it is to consider this feature. Since
all three women of the different series appear to be harsh, direct and even terrific, they
use to almost penetrate other’s personal (and emotional) space very often. A lot of
space between them and others, on the contrary, show their powerfulness in different
situations too and are used by directors in order to illustrate their allegedly superiority. This effect can also be created through specific positions of the camera. This is another very influential aspect and the eighth element of mise-en-scène. It is going to be another main feature used in this thesis in order to analyze and interpret scenes.

“Importantly, the position of the camera governs our access to the action. How we experience a given set of events is going to be profoundly affected by the nature of the view, or views, with which we are presented.” (Gibbs 2002: 19) Depending on the shot, the angle, the camera movement or the focus, the audience will have a different access to the situation going on on screen and they will experience the events in another way. The director can influence the viewers a lot by choosing a particular format. “The point here is that the position of the camera is going to determine our understanding of the scene. It will, for example, profoundly affect the way we experience a performance.” (Gibbs 2002: 19) It is even likely that a director can encourage the audience to emphasize with a certain character – or not. In the cases of Cersei, Gemma and Fiona, the latter is the case. Although all three share an actual rather bitter fate, they are presented powerful and untouchable. Moreover, the director can keep the audience at its distance as well, by using long shots or limit what the viewers can see. There can be hidden elements behind the camera, which are not revealed immediately.

It is the director who can choose what the viewers can see and what he/she does not want to show them. The frame of the screen (or in the screen) is therefore the ninth element of mise-en-scène. It has to be considered that “what is in the frame is only a selective view of a wider fictional world, and that the act of framing an action presents the film-maker with a whole range of choices including those concerning what is revealed and withheld from the audience” (Gibbs 2002: 26). Putting all previously explained aspects together leads to the tenth and last one: The interaction of the elements.

Having a look at the various aspects of mise-en-scène illustrates how many variables exist at the film-makers’ disposal, and shows how expressive they can be. It becomes obvious that all elements depend on their combination of others.

It is important to be able to describe the individual elements of mise-en-scène, and it is important to consider each element’s potential for expression. But it is worth remembering from the outset that these elements are most productively thought of in terms of their interaction rather than individually – in practice, it
is the interplay of elements that is significant. Additionally, we need to consider the significance acquired by the individual element by virtue of context: the narrative situation, the ‘world’ of the film, the accumulating strategies that the film-maker adopts. (Gibbs 2002: 26)

As mentioned above, one of the examples of interaction are clothes and colors, but also lightning and colors or action and space. These are just a few overlapping features. “Mise-en-scène does not just describe the contents of the frame, but simultaneously the organization of those elements.” (Gibbs 2002: 34) It is difficult to claim about individual moments or elements without taking the whole context into consideration, which is provided by the film or series.

2.2) The Definition of Power

Since this thesis tries to show how and why viewers experience women, such as Cersei, Fiona or Gemma, as strong, independent and, most importantly, powerful individuals – which is mainly achieved through special techniques of mise-en-scène – it is necessary to define what the term ‘power’ in the field of communication studies actually means. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, power is the “ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way” (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2014: Power), the “capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events” (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2014: Power) or “physical strength and force exerted by something or someone” (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2014: Power).

All of the three given definitions are somehow related to power, which is established in the performance and presentation of all three women. In order to go into greater detail, Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayr offer a different definition in their book:

In short, power comes from the privileged access to social resources such as education, knowledge and wealth. Access to these resources provides authority, status and influence, which is an enabling mechanism for the domination, coercion and control of subordinate groups. (Simpson 2010: 2)

By analyzing Cersei, Gemma or Fiona, it will be seen in the following chapter that they are presented in a rather privileged position, owning social resources, such as knowledge, wealth and/or education. Their status and authority is not equal to many other characters, which makes people around them a subordinate group they can con-
trol, influence and to a certain degree dominate. Nevertheless, power, in general, is not something static and not exclusively given to the three women in their series. “Power may be there in different forms and in different ways – all constantly changing in dynamic response to the behavior of others.” (Kedar 1987: 5) Moreover, Kedar suggests:

(...) that there are many different kinds of power and influence that are interrelated and have varied manifestations. When people are taking different roles, it may not be the case that one has power and one doesn’t, but that they have different kinds of power, and they are exercising it in different ways. (Kedar 1987: 5)

Depending on the role and characteristics, Cersei, Fiona and Gemma differ in the way they are presented powerful. How they vary in their performance and presentation will be described in the following chapter. There is one aspect though, which all three of them have in common and can be said to be the most important one: They dominate the situation, scene and people around them through special techniques of mise-en-scène. Grillo explains what domination actually means:

In other words, social and political stability cannot be achieved unless some members in a given society (the so-called dominant) have acquired the ability to exert power and influence upon others (the dominated); that is, they have acquired the capacity to impose constraints on others’ behavior and thoughts, the latter group being thereby subjected to the former. (Grillo 2005: 8)

Moreover, a powerful person is capable of imposing one’s will. “Power is a latent faculty, or potential, invested in the person who exercises it, i.e. an abstract form of possession.” (Watts 1991: 57) In order to exercise power, there has to be an intention and the action, which is intended, is against the second person’s will. It “may also be seen as a force through which collective interests can be realized, i.e. power is consensual” (Watts 1991: 58). Since all three women of the chosen TV-series try to reach their own goals, or, more importantly, want to protect their family, they do not confirm the last statement. By contrast, the next definition fits perfectly: “Power is thus conceptualized as an abstract commodity, the possession of which gives the possessor the ability to achieve her/his goals while denying others access to these same goals.” (Watts 1991: 59) Cersei, Fiona and Gemma have a lot of enemies who want to harm them or their children, so all of them apparently feel the need to become more power-
ful then them. Although, as far as the content itself is concerned, they are hardly possible to manage this, they are capable of assert themselves through mise-en-scène. The final definition of the exercise of power Watts gives in his work is the following: “A exercised power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s initially perceived interest, regardless of whether B later comes to accept the desirability of A’s actions.” (Watts 1991: 62)

2.3) Analyses and Interpretations of Powerful Scenes

In order to understand why viewers experience the three chosen female roles of the three different mentioned series as powerful characters, the following chapters of this thesis will analyze and interpret several scenes by using the technique of mise-en-scène. The paper is restricted to certain seasons of the TV-series, because some of them are still broadcasted and have not come to an end, while others are simply too long or, like in the case of American Horror Story: Coven (2013), are a limited series and are not related to the other seasons. Cersei from Game of Thrones: Season 1 (2012) and Game of Thrones: Season 2 (2013), Fiona from American Horror Story: Coven (2013) and Gemma from Sons of Anarchy: Season 1 (2008) and Sons of Anarchy: Season 2 (2009) are going to be the examples of women, who are presented independent and strong on screen. In the previous chapter the single elements of mise-en-scène were described and are now applied to scenes of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma. Each chapter will start with some information on the context of the characters. Afterwards, there will be a detailed analysis on what is literally seen on screen, followed by an interpretation.

1 For the rest of this thesis, the following references are used for the named characters:
All the following information about Cersei Lannister is from Game of Thrones, created by HBO, using the DVD from Warner Home Video. Season 1 was released in 2012 and season 2 in 2013.
All the following information about Fiona Goode is from American Horror Story: Coven, created by FX, using the DVD from Twentieth Century Fox. The season was released in 2013.
All the following information about Gemma Teller Morrow is from Sons of Anarchy, created by FX, using the DVD from Twentieth Century Fox. The first season was released in 2009.

2 Since one of the most important elements of mise-en-scène is the position of the camera, this thesis will use the definitions of shots from Film: Ratgeber für Lehrer by Jens Hildebrand.
2.3.1) Cersei Lannister from *Game of Thrones*

Cersei Lannister from the medieval fantasy HBO TV-series *Game of Thrones: Season 1* (2012) and *Game of Thrones: Season 2* (2013), played by the actress Lena Headey, is one of the most complex characters and therefore an extremely interesting role to analyze. From the very beginning, she is presented as one of the main antagonists and does not seem to fear anything in order to protect her family. She belongs to the house of Lannister and is (at least in season 1) married to Robert Baratheon, who is king of Westeros. This makes her the queen and, after the death of her husband, queen mother, because one of her sons, Joffrey, heirs the iron-throne. One of the most unconventional aspects of Cersei is the fact that she is in a (sexual) relationship with her own twin brother, Jaime, who is also the father of her children, Joffrey, Myrcella and Tommen. She protects this secret by all means, because her husband, Robert from house Baratheon, would kill her and her children immediately, if he found out. Although many houses fight against each other in order to rule over Westeros, the Lannisters – Cersei and her son especially – appear as the main antagonists of the fair-minded house of Stark. (Game of Thrones 2012-2013)

**Scene 1: Introduction of Cersei (Season 1, Episode 1, 18:00-19:38)**

The first scene Cersei appears on screen in *Game of Thrones* (Game of Thrones 2012) is in season 1, episode 1. The hand of the king, Lord Arryn, has just died and after the introduction of the Starks of Winterfell, King’s Landing is presented. The scene starts with an establishing shot of the city. The color tone is orange and the bells of the churches are ringing, due to Lord Arryn’s funeral. This is followed by a close-up of the bells and a tracking shot, entering the cathedral towards the corpse. (Image 4.1.1) A close-up of Lord Arryn’s face with stones on his eyes and a long shot of the ritual, including priests in costumes and many candles can be seen afterwards.

Cersei stands on the gallery above, looking down on the scenery. A panning shot is used in order to move the camera slowly to the left, where her brother, Jaime, comes along the gallery towards her. Viewers cannot see her whole face, but from a

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3 All the following information and screenshots are from *Game of Thrones*, created by HBO, using the DVD from Warner Home Video. Season 1 was released in 2012 and season 2 in 2013.
side angle and her back. (Image 4.1.2) Cersei focuses on the ritual and does not look up immediately. He stands next to her and they start a conversation. They talk about the fact that a new hand is needed and about their childhood, so the audience knows their relationship to each other. Whenever Jaime is on screen, an over-the-shoulder shot is used, including Cersei’s shoulder and the back of her head. She, by contrast, does not look at him frontally, but over her shoulder, while a close up is used. Half of her face is lighted; the other half is rather dark. Although she bows over and Jaime is in the higher position, standing upright, the camera angle of her is not high, so they are filmed on one eye level. (Image 4.1.3) In the background, candles and the ritual itself can be seen when she is filmed. (Image 4.1.4) During the conversation, Cersei turns her head again and focuses the scenery below, while Jaime keeps talking. In between, the corpse is on screen too. (Game of Thrones 2012)

Interpretation: The very first scene including Cersei already covers a lot of meaning. By using the colors orange, red and gold for Kings Landing – the town she and her family lives – a huge contrast to Winterfell is created. Since Winterfell is the hometown of the Starks, this contrast is significant. The warm colors highlight the rather Mediterranean climate of King’s Landing and the freezing temperature of the
North, which is always shown in cold colors, such as blue, white and grey. Moreover, the differences between the two houses and locations are symbolized.

By introducing Cersei in the cathedral, while the ritual of Lord Arryn’s funeral is going on, she is put in an unusual setting right away. Later on it will be revealed that she is responsible for his death, because he knew that her brother Jaime is the father of her three children. She stands on the gallery, bows over and literally looks down on others. This puts her in a superior and higher position than many others in the cathedral. The darkness of the half of her face lets her appear mysterious and treat her with caution. Cersei does not turn her head immediately when Jaime enters the room or stands next to her. She prefers taking the time she needs in order to do so. Not looking at her brother throughout the entire conversation, but turning her head away and focusing on the corpse again, underlines her lordliness. One of the most significant camera positions is the angle. Although Cersei bows over the gallery and is therefore below Jaime’s eye level, they do not film her from above. This creates the effect that they are on one level, even though they are not, because he stands upright and is actually looking down on her. Her introduction already creates the impression that the queen is in the highest position of the scene. (Game of Thrones 2012)

Scene 2: Cersei’s Arrival at Winterfell (Season 1, Episode 1, 22:29-28:13)

Shortly after Cersei is introduced, the whole family of the king and the queen, including soldiers and some of their bannermen decide to travel to Winterfell in order to convince Lord Eddard Stark, Paramount of the North, to become the new Hand of the King. Bran, Eddards son, detects them, while he is climbing on the roofs and towers of Winterfell. Their arrival is presented by using an establishing shot. Horses, riders, banners and a pompous carriage can be seen far away. After a few shots, which film Brans climbing down the wall and running back to his family (which is not important for this specific analysis), they use a long shot again. This time the royal family and their followers enter the scene from the right, while the camera goes from the ground up to them. Firstly, the audience can see the feet of the many horses and the wheels of the carriage. When the camera is on the top, the faces of the people and the banners of the Lannisters and Baratheons are visible. They wear great amour, weapons and helmets. Important characters, such as Joffrey, Cersei’s son, the king or the queen’s
brother, are filmed in a medium long shot separately in between. After they come to a stop, Cersei reveals herself.

The Starks are filmed in a medium-long shot, standing in a line. All family members are on screen at the same time. Behind them, the people of Winterfell are filmed, dressed in clothes of farmers and ordinary people. King Robert Baratheon is filmed in a medium-shot, getting off his horse. Meanwhile, the Starks are filmed, while they kneel before their king. The camera follows the king, coming towards them. Lord Eddard Stark is filmed in a medium shot, using a high angle, the hand of the king is also on screen, making a gestures, which tells Lord Eddard and his family to stand up. After a couple of shots, which show how he greets all single members of the Starks separately in a friendly way, the queen enters the scene.

In a long shot, the carriage, colored in dark brown and red, is on screen. Armored guards and many maids surround it. In this shot, Cersei steps out the carriage, dressed in fur, bright colors and a red, golden dress. Her hair itself is golden/blond too. (Image 4.1.5) The camera tracks her while she comes closer to the family of Lord Stark but Cersei does not look at them. In the background the guards and bannermen are presented and in between they show a mid-shot of Jaime, Cersei’s brother, as he puts off his helmet. This happens while king Robert is still talking to the Starks; the queen keeps silent. The next shot is an over-the-shoulder-shot, filming the backsides of Catelyn’s, Eddard’s wife’s, head, while Cersei enters the screen from the left. The camera tracks her until both the backs and backsides of Catelyn’s and Eddard’s heads can be seen. She stands in between them when the camera stops. She is on focus and smiles for a second. In her background are a burning torch and her many guards. After a clear cut, Eddard Stark is filmed in a close-up, while parts of Cersei can be seen on the left side of the screen. He bows, in order to kiss her hand, and the camera tracks him, using a high angle. (Image 4.1.6) Behind Lord Eddard are his people, dressed in the colors blue, black and grey. He greets her and she is filmed in a close-up, smiling slightly, followed by a close up of Catelyn with two older men – the Master at Arms and Master Luwin – left and right behind her. Both men do not look at the queen directly. Catelyn also bows before her queen and the camera tracks her too, using a high angle, while Cersei’s shape is on screen on the left again. While Catelyn stands up after her bow, Cersei is filmed in a close-up, using a low angle, looking down on her. (Image 4.1.7) Until now, she has not spoken yet.
When the king tells that he wants to visit the crypts, where his old love, Ed-dard’s sister, is buried, Cersei resists. While she tells her husband that there will be time to visit the dead later, she is filmed in an over-the-shoulder-shot of the Starks with her brother, son and her son’s personal guard in her background. In the right corner of the screen, two men in red clothes can be seen. Her brother’s golden armor peaks out, like her son’s blond/golden hair. (Image 4.1.8) When king Robert is filmed during this dialogue, a mid-shot is used. In his background are a few guards of Winterfell and next to him are Bran, Arya and Sansa – three children of Eddard and Catelyn Stark. Afterwards, the king leaves the scene, Eddard’s look at Cersei is caught in a close-up of his face; the back of Cersei’s head is not on focus but still there. After a clear cut, a close-up of her face is shown, where Cersei lowers her eyes. Eddard follows his king and leaves the scene too, which is filmed in a medium-long shot. All Starks are on screen, when Eddard leaves to the left and many ordinary people of Winterfell stand in the background. All of them look towards the camera. Cersei keeps her position, with her back to the audience, facing all the Starks and their followers. She wears bright, golden coat and the light colored fur together with her blond/golden hair, while all the others are dressed in dark, grey and blue. The wall, which is also on screen behind them, fits in the color scheme of them. (Image 4.1.9) Some close-ups of the Starks’ faces show their reaction towards the queen, but she just gives them a quick, sharp look, turns around and leaves the screen. (Image 4.1.10) At the end of the scene, Cersei can be seen walking away from the people of Winterfell, but also the camera. Her son, her brother and her son’s personal guard are filmed in an over-the-shoulder shot (back of the Stark’s heads), looking at the Starks, while the queen passes them, leaving on the left side of the screen. The men in red in the right corner are still there too. (Game of Thrones 2012)
Interpretation: This very detailed analysis of this rather long scene contains a lot of information on how Cersei is presented stronger and more superior than many others – even the king. To start with, the queen does not ride, but stays in the carriage, which is so big that it can be recognized even in the establishing shot at the very beginning from far away. Nevertheless, she is the last one of her family, who shows herself to the Starks and the audience. When her family, guards and bannermen enter Winterfell, a tilting shot is used, literally looking up to them. The queen keeps hidden until the king himself has already greeted all of the Starks. She does not even look at them immediately and after the audience had to wait to see her, they now have to wait to hear her, because Cersei does not greet them or talk to them. She takes the time she needs and shows her disinterest in interacting with others. Moreover, by not looking at them, she ignores the Starks and presents herself even more important than her husband, King Robert Baratheon, who immediately talks to the Starks and does not hesitate to greet them.

One of the most striking features of this scene are the over the shoulder shots. They put an emphasis on the discrepancies of the families. The audience is always part of one of the houses, facing the other on the opposite. When Cersei is looking at
them, the Starks have ordinary people in their background. By contrast, the queen is always presented with supporters. During the short discussion with her husband, he is presented together with the people of Winterfell, unlike Cersei, who appears together with her son and brother. All the time, there are the backs of heads on screen, watching the others and throughout the whole scene, the two families are presented separately and hold apart. As far as Cersei is concerned, she is always on the more powerful side, when others are looking at her. She is never behind someone else, but in front of others and on focus. Another aspect, which highlights her position, is the camera angles, which let her appear intimidating. She looks down on the people in front of her, including the audience. When Lord Eddard Stark or his wife, Catelyn, greet her and kneel down or bow, an emphasis is put on their inferiority to Cersei. Without even saying a word for such a long time, the way the camera shots and angles present her, is providing her with power.

The colors and clothes are significant elements in this scene too. The carriage of Cersei represents her house, the House of Lannister, whose banners’ colors are red and gold. In order to highlight the difference to the Starks, these colors are used to remind the audience on her belonging. Although the king, who possesses actual power, is from house Baratheon, Cersei, together with her brother Jaime and her son Joffrey, literally shine out in gold and red – the colors of her original house before she got married, the House of Lannister. In the rather cold colored surroundings of Winterfell, their colors are absolutely eye-catching and distinguish them from all others. Again, not even the king himself appears in such pompous clothes and colors, but in black and therefore fits rather to the people of Winterfell and the Starks. Cersei, in particular, attracts attention with her hair and clothes. The contrast to all others is striking and let her appear highborn. Cersei even faces all the people of Winterfell on her own with her back to the audience. The colors of her clothes emphasizes her power and independence, because it is not only the queen, as a person, who stands opposite to the (less powerful) House of Stark and ordinary people, but also the only one in completely different colors, almost complementary ones. Burns explains the following about the symbolism of the color gold:

Seit es Menschen gibt, hat Gold die Augen geblendet und die Herzen bewegt. Es ist ein uraltes Symbol irdischen wie ewigen Glücks, Symbol des Heils, der Wahrheit und Unversehrtheit, aber ebenso des teuflischen Trugs; ein einzigartiges Material mit besonderen Eigenschaften, schwerer als Blei, geschmeidiger
Another aspect, which lets Cersei appear powerful in this scene is the way space is used. After she has come to Winterfell and literally enters their ground, it is almost all the time the queen who is entering the screen and therefore the space of others. Without asking for permission, she steps in and, if she decides that it is enough, leaves again. The last shot, especially, marks her superiority again, by turning her back to the Starks, their people and the audience, leaving the screen by passing her brother and son again and ending the scene. (Game of Thrones 2012)

**Scene 3: Cersei at Winterfell’s Feast (Season 1, Episode 1, 39:24-44:23)**

The last scene taken from season one episode one, is again very striking as far as the queen’s superiority is concerned. In order to worship the king’s arrival, Winterfell celebrates and prepares a great feast in their halls. Cersei is supposed to attend it, together with her husband. Unfortunately, the king is far more interested in other women and is not ashamed of enjoying himself with others in front of her.

After an establishing shot of the festivity, the audience can see King Robert kissing someone else, before Cersei and Catelyn appear on screen, watching him. In front of them, there is a table, with a lot of delicacies, which are stacked rather on Cersei’s side. She wears a red and golden dress, a little crown and her hair is flamboyantly done. Catelyn’s wardrobe is rather simple and dark. There are some candles to be seen on her side, while Cersei sits in front of a dark background. Both sit above and separated from the ordinary people, looking down on them. (Image 4.1.11) The camera shows the king, kissing another woman again, which is followed by a close-up of Cersei’s face after a clear cut. On the left edge of the screen, the light of a burning candle is visible. (Image 4.1.12) She swallows and lowers her eyes. After a short scene, showing Eddard’s son and brother – later including Cersei’s infamous imp-brother – talking to each other on the outside, their scene continuous. Another establishing shot of the scenery brings the audience back to the feast. Firstly, Lord Eddard and his brother have a conversation inside the hall, which is later followed by Cersei and
Catelyn together on screen again. This time, there is the light of a burning candle very close to the camera on the right side of Cersei. While Catelyn looks at her and starts to ask her some questions, the queen keeps looking straight ahead, gazing at her husband. (Image 4.1.13) She just turns her head quickly to Catelyn when she answers and looks back again. The next medium-long shot shows Sansa, Catelyn’s daughter, who wants to marry Cersei’s son, Joffrey. The girl sits on the table in between all other people who attend the feast, surrounded by maids and friends and looks at the queen of King’s Landing. Cersei spots her, filmed in a close-up, with a slight low camera angle, with a rather friendly look on her face. This is followed by a close-up of Catelyn, who talks to the queen about the North and looking at her while she is speaking. In her background are many candles. In the next shot – a close-up of the queen again, with a burning candle on the left side of the screen – she does not look at Eddard Stark’s wife, while she keeps telling her a story. These two shots take turns for a couple of times.

In between, Sansa is filmed, standing up from her table and coming closer. She enters the visual field of Cersei, filmed in a medium-shot with a low angle, with many lights in her background. She looks on the floor and then up to the queen. Cersei, still sitting, looks up to her and greets her, filmed on a medium shot, together with Catelyn again. They start a conversation on how old Sansa is and whether she is already able to get pregnant. The camera comes closer to both Cersei’s and Sansa’s faces in each single shot. There is no medium shot anymore, but close-ups. Catelyn is not longer shown, until Sansa looks at her mother helplessly, who is filmed in a short close-up then. When Sansa tells, that she is not able to get pregnant yet, Cersei lowers her eyes, looks back into Sansa’s eyes again and changes the topic immediately. They finish the conversation with smiles, while the camera takes turns and in the end Sansa leaves the screen and both Catelyn and Cersei are on screen again. After a clear cut, the queen focuses on how Sansa is leaving, but then she turns her head and actually talks to Catelyn about her daughter while she looks at her, filmed in an over the shoulder shot. Then, Cersei turns her head away and another over-the-shoulder-shot is used, showing Catelyn’s face on focus with an insecure look on her face in the queen’s direction and Cersei’s (unfocused) head, looking straight ahead again. In the background of Catelyn, some candles can be seen. (Image 4.1.14) (Game of Thrones 2012)
Interpretation: The last scene, which is taken from season one, episode one, is similar to the two previous ones, but different in many ways, too. Nevertheless, it proves that Cersei is presented mighty and strong.

To begin with, Cersei is dressed in a very remarkable way. Apart from her typical red and gold clothes, her hair is extravagantly styled. The little crown on her head is not necessarily eye-catching, but still a symbol of power. By contrast, Catelyn, next to her, gets lost. Although she is Eddard Stark’s wife and therefore a woman with actual power, too, Cersei beats her and all other attendants of the feast with her appearance.

This time, also the décor and the props are significant. The amount of delicacies, for instance, gets more and more until it reaches its peak at Cersei’s end, while there is hardly anything on Catelyn’s half. Her abundance, in contrast to others, is symbolized in these pictures and puts her in the privileged position. Although the next aspect is also part of lightning, the candles in the room carry some meaning too. This time, it is not Cersei, who gets the obvious attention through the light, but rather the two Starks. On the other hand, the darkness around and behind Cersei lets her shine even more and adds a mysterious touch. Catelyn and her daughter are fair-minded characters, like all members of her family, but Cersei Lannister is obviously presented
as one of the antagonists. The contrast between light versus darkness and good versus evil is symbolized through these features and although Catelyn draws the audience’s attention to her because of the lights, it is Cersei who stands out of the mysterious darkness and becomes therefore the even more important person. Catelyn, with her simple appearance, gets lost next to Cersei and in the lightened half of the screen.

During the scene, the light of a burning candle appears for two short shots on Cersei’s half of the screen too – not in the background, but rather in front of her. This happens after the queen has to watch her husband enjoying himself with another woman directly before her eyes. In the Western world, it symbolizes the fire, fury and rage inside her, which comes up during this humiliating situation. Moreover, the lights work as some kind of framing, too. Catelyn tries to distract Cersei and starts a conversation, but the queen seems to hardly listen and although they are sitting next to each other, the light of the burning candle on the left side in front of her isolates her from Catelyn. She is presented as an individual person, sealed off from all the others.

Besides, the close-ups of both women create a lot of distance between the two women. Even though they sit next to each other, the close-ups can also exclude one character. This can be seen during the conversation between Sansa and Cersei, where Catelyn is suddenly not part of it anymore. Cersei, especially, seems to lead the conversation, by asking questions and ignoring Sansa’s mother.

Another aspect, which illustrates Cersei’s power, is the way she refuses to look at Catelyn. She is focusing on her husband, who kisses someone else in front of her, but also highlighting her superior position. She is the one who decides whether to pay attention to someone else, or not. Catelyn tries to keep eye contact and looks at her most of the time, especially while speaking, but the queen does not seem to care at all. She even answers without turning her head in Catelyn’s direction. It is also significant, how she talks to Sansa. The girl has to come to Cersei in order to talk to her and does this while she has to stand in front of her. The queen stays in her seat, looking up to Sansa. In both conversations, the queen keeps her position and others have to adapt to it. This lack of action, in this case, vests her with power and forces others to accommodate. (Game of Thrones 2012)
Scene 4: Power is Power. (Season 2, Episode 1, 35:40-38:17)

The following scene includes Lord Baelish, a rather sneaky character, living at court in King’s Landing, who has a conversation with the queen. He is well aware of the fact that the father of her children is not King Robert, but her own twin brother, Jaime. By threatening her with the words “Knowledge is power.” (Game of Thrones 2013), Lord Baelish provokes the queen and risks his life, because Cersei would do everything in order to protect her sons and her daughter. If this secret got revealed, all three of them, and the queen herself, would be in great danger. She proves him that she has got the real power, because she is in the higher position at court and his life depends on her goodwill. Her answer to his statement – “Power is power.” (Game of Thrones 2013) – is supposed to steady Lord Baelish. In this scene, Cersei’s quote may outrank her appearance on screen, which is, nevertheless, remarkable again and is therefore another good example of how she is presented superior, as far as mise-en-scène is concerned.

In a long shot, Lord Baelish walks alone towards the camera. The warm colors and the whole décor tell the audience right away that this scene takes place in King’s Landing. In the right corner there is a young boy cleaning the floor on his knees. Actually, the audience can just see his silhouette. Lord Baelish, by contrast, gets enough lightning, so viewers can notice him better. The camera comes closer to him and he enters the parts of the screen, which are rather dark because of the backlight – the sunlight does not reach this area until he is covered in shadows too. At this moment, Cersei comes around the corner behind him, followed by guards. She is in full light and wears a red and golden dress. The guards wear their full amour and helmets. (Image 4.1.15) She calls him; he turns around and bows, while she still comes closer to him until she reaches the dark passage too. She takes a turn to her left, entering an inner courtyard and Lord Baelish and the four guards follow her unrequested. In the next shot, a medium long shot, all of them come closer to the camera again. Due to the bright sunlight, all of them are lighted until they reach the other side of the yard, entering another passage, which is rather dark, where Cersei and the Lord stop walking. After a clear cut, an over-the-shoulder-shot, showing Lord Baelish and the backside of Cersei, follows. Behind him is a wall, which is divided in two halves through the lightning. He stands in front of the dark side and the queen’s silhouette stands out from the light side of the background. When Cersei is filmed in the next shot, which
is an over-the-shoulder shot from his perspective, there is guard to be seen behind her. (Image 4.1.16) Lord Baelish’s back is hardly noticeable on the left side of the screen. During their conversation, these shots take turns a couple of times and in one particular one, she touches his brooch. Her hand enters his space, while he is filmed. (Image 4.1.17) When both stop exchanging courtesies and get closer to the point, the conversation gets less polite and Lord Baelish, as mentioned above, starts to threaten her. Still, over-the-shoulder shots are used, but the camera comes closer and closer to their faces. When he indirectly tells her that he knows about her secret, the guard behind her is not on screen anymore. (Image 4.1.18)

After she has heard enough, she turns around and tells her guards to cease him. After a clear cut, there is a very short close-up of Lord Baelish, who gets caught, before there is a medium-long shot of all six of them. The men are on the right half of the screen, while Cersei stands apart from them on the left. This is followed by an over-the-shoulder shot, filming Cersei, while the guards and Lord Baelish jockey in front of her. When she bluffs and tells her sentinels to cut his throat, the camera focuses on the lord, who is captured and surrounded. Again, these shots take turns during their argument goes on. The queen does not really want to kill him, so she takes back her order and tells the guards to step back. A long shot with a bird’s eye-view is used for this shot. The lord is in the middle of the group, facing Cersei, who wants the sentinels to turn around and close their eyes. (Image 4.1.19) Lord Baelish is filmed in a medium-shot, before Cersei is on screen, walking towards him. Therefore, the filmmakers decided on a panning shot – the camera tracks her, while she comes closer to the lord, until his backside is also to be seen on the left side. The guard appeared in her background again. (Image 4.1.20) When she ends the conversation, by telling him that “Power is power” (Game of Thrones 2013), she leaves the scene and steps out of his space. Cersei passes him and the guards follow her, while Lord Baelish is still on screen. He shows his back to the audience and is rather dark due to the backlight. In the last shot, he is filmed in a medium-long-shot, but instead of the lord, the young boy’s silhouette, cleaning the floor, is on focus close to the camera in front of him. (Game of Thrones 2013)
Interpretation: In her hometown, surrounded by men exclusively, Cersei is illustrated as the most powerful person. Apart from her statement, which highlights her superiority too, the way her appearance is presented on screen is enough to depict her as an incredibly mighty person.

To start with, Cersei’s typical colors – red and gold – point out. When she enters the scene, coming towards Lord Baelish, who does not know that she is coming or even sees her, she rushes in and draws all the attention to her immediately. She seems almost threatening before she speaks a single word. The color red itself covers a lot of meaning and is chosen deliberately for her wardrobe and house:

The connection to blood and nobility is incontrovertible. Her appearance is eye-catching and dangerous right away. Cersei comes around the corner, entering the light spots of the setting, while Lord Baelish fades from the spotlight. Even during their conversation, there is literally nothing behind Lord Baelish, except darkness. There are backlights, which put the lord additionally into darkness for the viewer, while Cersei is always on the bright side.

The most striking feature of this scene are the guards. Whenever the queen is on screen, she has support behind her. Her sentinels follow her, watch her and most importantly, do not leave her alone. Either they stand behind her or in front of her and in both cases the audience gets reminded that she is not alone and therefore more dangerous. Lord Baelish does not have anyone who backs him up, but when he tries to frighten and threaten her, he strikes a nerve and for a second, Cersei is presented vulnerable. Suddenly, there are no guards behind her and she gets nervous and is presented weak. Nevertheless, it doesn’t take her long to get back her courage and uses her power and guards in order to manage the situation properly. After she orders her sentinels to cease him, her support can be seen on screen behind her again. This time, the audience can just see their backs, which is done this way in order to put an emphasis on her independence and should illustrate that she can and will protect her family on her own by all means, if necessary. Still, the guards back her up and are there towards the end of the scene again.

Another aspect, which is significant, is the distance, which is created through camera position and angles. They are divided through color and lightning too and, the moment they stop to talk, both are presented rather isolated on screen and not together anymore. The more suspenseful the discussion gets, the bigger the distance between the two gets. There is always just one person on focus, while the other one appears
more like a shadow on the edge of the frame. It is Cersei who decides to penetrate Lord Baelish space by reaching out her arm in order to touch his brooch. Sharp lines created through light and shadow increases the gap between them during the scene. The queen is obviously not afraid of entering another person’s space without being asked. Before he threatens her, they walk side-by-side and even lead the four guards together, but afterwards she banishes him and isolates him. In the end, Cersei leaves him alone, passes him and leaves the whole scene, while he stays alone. It is again her who makes all the decisions, as far as entering, leaving or penetrating space is concerned and although Lord Baelish strikes a nerve at a certain point, she recovers herself and oppresses him — obviously on screen, but this time also as far as the content is concerned. (Game of Thrones 2013)

2.3.2) Fiona Goode from American Horror Story: Coven

In the third season of the FX TV-series American Horror Story: Coven (2013) Jessica Lange portrays one of the main characters, called Fiona Goode, who is both the protagonist and antagonist, depending on the plot, circumstances and opinion. Her very complex role makes her one of the most interesting and special characters of the cast. Presented as witty, fearless, dangerous, charming and graceful at the same time, she is the perfect supreme of the coven leading all the witches who joined it in order to control their powers. The spectrum between huge kindness in her action and deceitfulness, even cruelty, is extremely broad and therefore it is hard to see the main antagonist in her. Fiona Goode is incredibly vain and cannot handle to age or lose her position as a supreme, and is therefore willing to do dubious things. Her abilities as a witch are more or less endless, so she has a repertoire to face everyone and everything that threatens her. Like Cersei Lannister, she tries to protect her beloved ones and shows no merci in fighting the coven’s enemies. Although her vanity is incontrovertible, her daughter and pupils can count on her, which does, nevertheless, not mean that she would not use them in order to reach her own goals. The supreme would not allow anyone to stand in her way – neither inner nor outer enemies of the coven. Towards the end of the season, which is completely independent of the previous or following ones, she comes to know that she has cancer, which bothers her desperately, but still, Fiona Goode, knows how to fight and manipulate. Apart from witch hunters, who be-
come their main enemies, the Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau, played by Angela Bassett, and her followers use to challenge the coven a lot, until both incredibly mighty and influential women ally, in order to get rid of their common enemy. (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)  

Scene 1: Introduction of Fiona Goode (Season 3, Episode 1, 15:53-18:26) 

After all other members of the coven, including her daughter, introduce her by talking about their supreme in the previous scene, Fiona Goode actually appears on screen. The first shot is a long shot on a rainy street, using the bird’s eye view, showing a black car from above, entering the scene. A close-up of a foot, wearing a black high heel, stepping out of the car, follows this. (Image 4.2.1) Afterwards, another long shot with a bird’s view is used, filming a black umbrella from above, walking towards a building and entering it. (Image 4.2.2) The scene takes place in an institute for scientific research for beauty products. This is illustrated by the next shot, which shows a screen with a monkey, used for experiments, on it. The camera now tracks the two people – still not really recognizable – who sit on the end of the huge room they sit in. It comes closer and exposes a modern furnished facility, a lot of metal objects and cold colors, such as blue, white and silver. There is more than one screen in the room, presenting the monkey.

The tracking shot leads to the two people in the back of the room, showing a man standing, facing the audience, and a woman, who sits with her back towards the camera. She has got blond hair and wears a black dress. The camera comes closer and closer, turns around, passing the scientist and another screen, which stands between the two of them, until the woman, who turns out to be Fiona Goode, is filmed in a medium shot. She watches the video the man shows her, looking to the left and covers her face with her hair for another few seconds. (Image 4.2.3) Right behind her, where the camera came from and the entrance is, comes a lot of light into the room. The other half, where the screen is placed, it is almost completely dark. The two of them have a conversation about a beauty product Fiona Goode wants, in order not to age, but the scientist cannot give it to her, because research has not been finished yet. While they talk, an angle-reverse-shot is used to depict their talking. Clear cuts between the shots

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4 All the following information and screenshots are from American Horror Story: Coven, created by FX, using the DVD from Twentieth Century Fox. The season was released in 2013.
are used throughout the whole scene. Firstly, when the man is filmed, he is positioned on the left corner of the screen, with a lot of empty space to the right of him, while she is placed rather in the middle. In between, both are filmed together in a long shot, with either him or her showing his/her back to the audience, while the other faces the camera. The more suspenseful the conversation gets, because Fiona realizes that she cannot get the product so easily and quickly, although she has paid for research, the closer the camera films her. Although the scientist makes her aware of the smoking ban inside the facility at a certain point of their argument, the supreme of the coven lights her a cigarette. There are no medium shots during the angle-reverse-shots anymore, but close-ups of her, which is also the final shot of the scene. (Image 4.2.4) (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)

Interpretation: The introduction of the next powerful woman in this thesis starts differently than the one of Cersei Lannister. Before Fiona Goode is even on screen, other people of the series introduce her by talking about her and instead of showing her immediately. The audience has to wait until they can actually see her. After the car enters the scene, there are just single parts of her revealed until she is finally depicted completely. She even hides hair face behind her hair for a couple of seconds. This delay creates a lot of suspense and the character of Fiona Goode takes her time and de-
cedes when she reveals herself to the audience. This technique of delay leads to the assumption that she is a character worth waiting for and puts her from the very first scene into a superior position.

Another aspect that let her appear special and distinguished, are the colors connected with her. Everything Fiona Goode wears or possesses is completely black: Her dress, her shoes, her car and even her umbrella. The color black, which the supreme of the coven chooses it exclusively for her outfit, has the following connotations in the Western world:


This maybe does not necessarily lead to the assumption that she is powerful, mighty or superior to others, but at least not like all others. Her blond hair and her red lipstick point out even more, because of the outfit – just like she as a whole person sitting in front of the lighted. The white color of the chair creates another drastic contrast, which highlights her. The cold and metallic colors of the furniture of the facility stress the unusual situation Fiona is put into right away.

When the conversation gets more suspenseful and the scientist tells Fiona that she is not permitted to use the new product, her anger rises. This is illustrated through the camera, which comes closer and closer and let her appear increasingly threatening. Her penetrating look creates an intimidating situation the scientist is subjected to. When he tells her that smoking is prohibited, the supreme ignores this submission by keeping obtrusive eye contact – showing that she does not take any orders and does not care about prohibitions at all. Fiona Goode’s appearance on screen in her introductory scene is an independent, strong and provocative one. The huge delay of presenting her completely gives her the touch of a diva and tells the audience from the very beginning that the supreme of the coven is extraordinary. (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)
Scene 2: Fiona and her Pupils (Season 3, Episode 1, 36:18-37:49)

The next scene, which is going to be analyzed and interpreted in this thesis, is the one Fiona Goode introduces herself to her new pupils of the coven. The young women do not know their supreme yet and before Fiona enters the kitchen, where all of them came together, they watch the news and have a chat together. In the night before, two of the witches caused a car accident with their powers and therefore they are rather tense. Since Fiona Goode is the person who is going to be analyzed, the first part of the scene is not interesting for the purpose of this thesis and will be skipped.

During the conversation, Fiona enters the kitchen unannounced. This is filmed in a tracking shot, showing her from behind and following her into the room. She holds a cigarette in her hand and wears her typical black clothes. The next shot is a medium-long shot, presenting the kitchen with the butler and the young witches in it. The furniture and the walls are completely white. On the table is a lot of food and there are herbs on the shelves. Apart from the butler, who is dressed in a black suit, all other members of the coven wear colorful clothes. Fiona comes towards the camera, asking what they are talking about. The young women turn their head and look at her. The supreme keeps walking in order to get to the exact place she wants to stand, so she can grab the food she wants. Therefore, one of the witches has to step back, because Fiona would not stop. (Image 4.2.5) She stares at the witch, she almost ran into. The next shot is an over-the-shoulder shot, filming a close-up of Madison, using a high angle. Madison, played by Emma Roberts, is one of the young witches, who is responsible for the car accident. The young witch follows Fiona, who is leaving the screen immediately again, with her eyes. The camera switches and the supreme is filmed in an over-the-shoulder shot from a low angle. She talks to Madison, but does not look at her, but, instead, she grabs the food she wants from the table in front of her. (Image 4.2.6) After a close-up of Madison, who asks, who Fiona is, a long shot illustrates the whole kitchen from a very high angle. Then an angle-reverse shot films the ongoing conversation between the two. After a while, Fiona actually looks at Madison, who kept eye contact the whole time anyway and the camera comes closer to Fiona’s face. It films her in a close-up with a light low angle. The supreme gets very angry, because she is well aware of the fact that Madison and another witch caused the car accident. (Image 4.2.7) The young witch tells the supreme to go to hell, turns around and leaves the screen, but Fiona reaches out her arm, which is filmed in
a close-up and moves her fingers. (Image 4.2.8) In a medium shot, Madison turns around, looking at Fiona again, before another close-up of the supreme’s hand, making a final move, makes Madison fly through the kitchen against the wall. A swish pan moves the focus back to Fiona, who does not even look at the young witch anymore. In her background, Zoe, another witch, stares shocked at the supreme, while she continuous smoking her cigarette. (Image 4.2.9)

After a short medium shot, showing two of the young women sitting at the table and commenting the situation, Fiona is on screen again. Her arm and hand is filmed again in a close-up, stubbing out the cigarette on one of the plates. In this shot, the audience can see that even her fingernails are black varnished. (Image 4.2.10) Her black clothes are also on screen in front of the white surroundings. The next shot is a close-up of Fiona, filmed from a low perspective, and a panning shot, filming and following the supreme leaving the kitchen. A close-up of Zoe, a medium shot of the other witches and another long shot of the kitchen, presents the reactions of the young women. The last shot is one of the supreme coming towards the viewer, leaving the kitchen. (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)
Interpretation: The described scene is very striking as far as Fiona’s actions are concerned. Although none of the young witches know their supreme yet, the leader of the coven does not even make an attempt to introduce herself properly. During their conversation, she rushes in, pushes one of them back and penetrates their space regardless. With all eyes on her, Fiona acts rather disrespectfully and boldly. Her unannounced, surprising appearance leads to complete attention. Moreover, Fiona can afford to ignore the younger witches. She seeks for eye contact just when she wants to and resists it persistently, if that is what she wants. She also keeps talking to them while she enters or leaves the room. Even the smoking inside the house could be considered as disrespectful and stubbing the cigarette out on a plate, especially, is rude. The reactions to her impudent behavior are different. Madison, for example, reacts harshly and won’t get intimidated by the supreme, which leads to physical punishment. Fiona keeps calm, moves her arm and hand and – due to her powers as a witch – throws Madison through the kitchen against the wall. The whole action gives the supreme extreme authority and functions as a threat. Her dangerous appearance causes also the reaction of being shocked, because Zoe is almost paralyzed and literally stands in the shadow of Fiona, who completely ignores her. Without taking the content of the conversation into consideration, her actions and appearance as such make the supreme an incredibly powerful women on screen.

Besides, whenever Fiona Goode is filmed, she is filmed from below. The focus is on the supreme and the others seem to vanish next to her. There are recognizable contrasts, even though all witches stand close together. The supreme occupies the whole kitchen with her appearance, which pushes all others into the background. People have to step out the frame, when she wants them to. She does not consider others and would not stop, when they are in her way. Besides, it seems that every action of
Fiona is important, because the close-up draw the attention to her smallest movements. The more exciting the conversation between her and Madison gets, the closer the camera comes, which, again, increases the threat she radiates.

Another significant aspect, which distinguishes her from all others are her clothes and the color black. The white furniture, the colorful clothes of the young witches, the green herbs and the food on the table create such a difference between Fiona and all others. She almost seems to be a foreign body in her own coven. Since Fiona is not necessarily one of the fair-minded characters, her clothes somehow warn the audience that she might be an evil character and highlight the fact that she is most certainly not pure or innocent – which are connotations of the color white in the Western world. Fiona Goode stands out against all other members of the coven and her position as the supreme is marked through many details, which leads to a very powerful appearance on screen. (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)

**Scene 3: Fiona and Delphine LaLaurie (Season 3, Episode 3, 10:47-12:00)**

The last scene of Fiona Goode, which is going to illustrate why she appears powerful on screen, is a rather short one. In episode three of the third season, the supreme finds Delphine LaLaurie, played by Katy Bates, who was buried for almost 200 years. She is not used to the modern world and shocked about Obama, being President of the United States, since she has last seen America full of slavery. If there is one thing Fiona Goode hates above all, it is racism, so she does not treat Delphine LaLaurie kindly, but instead forces her to be the new housemaid. This scene is special because two strong women clash together, but the role of Jessica Lange can win out over Katy Bates, if it is analyzed with the technique of mise-en-scène.

The first shot is a close-up of the television, broadcasting a speech given by Obama. What follows is a medium-shot of Delphine LaLaurie, weeping, because a black man has become president. She wears a baroque dress, which looks shabby, due to its age. When Fiona enters the room, the whole scene is filmed in an over the shoulder shot from LaLaurie’s perspective. There is also the television, a bed and a cupboard in the room and although the walls and the floor are white, the atmosphere is rather dark and gloomy. Fiona wears her typical black clothes and brings the uniform of a maid with her. The light draws the attention rather to the television than to the supreme. She closes the door and comes in, while LaLaurie is filmed in medium
shots in between. In one of them, Fiona goes through the screen (Image 4.2.11) and stands in front of her, before she herself is filmed in a medium shot from aside while she unwraps the uniform of the maid. When LaLaurie mentions that the television has to lie, because no black man could be the President of the United States, the scene again is filmed in an over the shoulder shot from her perspective. While she talks, Fiona, who stands basically at the other end of the room, behind the television, turns around and looks at her. She comes closer to LaLaurie in order to be able to watch the program. After another medium shot of the appalled woman, where parts of Fiona can be seen on the left side of the screen, the supreme is filmed in a medium shot from a low angle. There are clear cuts used in between the shots. She looks down on Delphine LaLaurie, telling her in a rather unfriendly way that times have changed. (Image 4.2.12)

The next shot is a panning shot, following Fiona to the room back to the cupboard in order to get the uniform. Since LaLaurie was a noble woman at her time, she gets very angry that she is now supposed to be a maid. A tilting shot tracks her standing up, facing Fiona, who is also on screen on the left side. Their conversation continuous and is filmed in an angle-reverse shot. The low angle, the supreme is filmed in, is remarkable, while LaLaurie, although she is the one complaining and getting angry, is just filmed from above. (Image 4.2.13) When Fiona has heard enough, she steps closer to LaLaurie, penetrating her space and pressing the uniform into her hands. She covers huge parts of the screens, although she is not even on focus. Her black clothes cover half of the screen and LaLaurie’s dress disappears behind the uniform. (Image 4.2.14) (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)
Interpretation: In this scene, Fiona Goode outplays Delphine LaLaurie by penetrating her opposite's space constantly. Firstly, she enters the screen while actually LaLaurie is filmed, and secondly, Fiona does not back off from pushing her almost back by coming closer and pressing the uniform into her hands. She penetrates LaLaurie’s space and dominates as far as their authority is concerned. It is never Fiona’s opposite who steps into the supreme’s territory. Although LaLaurie gets angry towards the end of their conversation and stands up challenging, she cannot win through, because Fiona appears to be the person with more force.

Moreover, Fiona Goode literally looks down on her opposite and the low angle puts an emphasize on her superiority. She even bows down to LaLaurie, increasing the threat, which she is radiating. Without taking the content of the conversation into consideration, on screen, the role of Fiona appears to be more powerful and threatening than LaLaurie’s. Both women know how to assert themselves, but by analyzing and interpreting the scene according to mise-en-scène, the supreme of the coven dominates significantly. (American Horror Story: Coven 2013)

2.3.3) Gemma Teller Morrow from Sons of Anarchy

In the FX television series Sons of Anarchy: Season 1 (2008) and Sons of Anarchy: Season 2 (2009) Katey Sagal plays the role of the fictional character Gemma Teller Morrow. Like Fiona Goode from American Horror Story: Coven (2013), it is arguable whether or not she is the main antagonist of the series, because her role is ambivalent. There are scenes she appears as a loving, caring mother and scenes where she is rather cruel, harsh and mighty. The love for her son, Jax Teller, and her important position for the motorcycle club SAMCRO makes her the matriarch of the series. She is
beloved by all its members and does not back off from any danger in order to protect them. Therefore, Gemma has rough and shocking methods, which is the reason she is most certainly not one of the fair-minded characters at all. After the founder of SAMCRO, John Teller, died, she married the new leader of the club, Clay Morrow. Still, Gemma is no official member of the club, because she is a woman. Jax’ brother, Thomas, died because of a heart disorder, she herself suffers from. Nevertheless, she appears strong throughout the whole series and knows how to gain acceptance and respect in between an exaggeratedly stereotypical male surrounding. This is again mainly done by using the proper methods to film all scenes she appears in. (Sons of Anarchy 2008-2009) 

Scene 1: Introduction of Gemma (Season 1, Episode 1, 50:41-52:48)

The following scene is not really the first time Gemma is on screen, but rather the first time she does not appear as a loving mother, but as the tough, strong and intimidating woman she can be, if it is necessary or her family is in danger. Jax’ pregnant ex-wife, Wendy, is a drug addict and after taking too much, she collapses and has to be brought to hospital. Due to the genetic heart disorder also Gemma suffers from and an emergency C-section, the baby is left ten weeks premature and it is unlikely that he will survive. Gemma is absolutely furious and visits Wendy at the hospital in order to threaten her so her grandson will not be exposed to any danger, Wendy might put him into.

Gemma’s entry into the room is filmed in an over-the-shoulder shot from Wendy’s perspective. There is hardly anything to be seen from Wendy and she is not on focus. There are typical props and appropriate décor for a patient’s room. Gemma comes in slowly with a friendly look on her face, wearing a brown leather jacket and a blouse with a large cleavage. After a clear cut, Wendy, who is presented obviously weak and sick, is on screen. When Gemma closes the door, she turns her head away, looks on the floor, before she is filmed in a medium shot, looking quickly in Wendy’s direction with a smile on her face. The wall behind her gets darker on the left side and is even black at the end of the frame. When Gemma starts a conversation, telling her that her grandson will survive, Wendy looks up to her. In her background, a bedside

5 All the following information and screenshots are from Sons of Anarchy, created by FX, using the DVD from Twentieth Century Fox. Season 1 was released in 2008 and season 2 in 2009.
lamp lights the room in her half. The camera tracks Gemma, who comes closer to the bed, her son’s ex-wife lies in. This is filmed in an over-the-shoulder shot again, presenting Wendy on the screen too. In the next shot though, which is filmed from Gemma’s perspective, half of the screen is covered with SAMCRO’s matriarch’s back, which is, due to the lack of light on her half of the room, black. (Image 4.3.1) The baby’s mother cries, because she is relieved that her son will survive. Gemma comes closer, filmed from a very low angle, looking down on Wendy, who, by contrast, looks up, while Gemma’s arm and hand enters the screen, taking the younger woman’s hand. (Image 4.3.2) The matriarch starts to pray together with Wendy, but it turns out that Gemma’s intention is to threaten her opposite, because she put her grandson in danger. This sudden change of the atmosphere is still filmed in an over-the-shoulder shot from Wendy’s perspective from a very low angle. In between, there are medium shots of the mother with Gemma’s arm and hand on screen, as well as close-ups from SAMCRO’s matriarch. She is filmed from aside, with very little lighting so she almost appears like a silhouette. Her hair covers her eyes, so the focus is clear on the mouth and the words, which come out. The light background emphasizes the contrast. (Image 4.3.3) The camera goes down to Wendy, who cannot stand what Gemma tells her and has to shirk from her look. What follows are angle-reverse-shots, which present the ongoing argument. Gemma later turns her back to Wendy and continues talking, which is also filmed from a low angle and again there is a contrast between her background and her dark appearance.

The next shot is another over-the-shoulder shot, filming Gemma from behind while she keeps insulting Wendy, before she turns around and comes very close to the bed again in order to strangle her. When she does that, she penetrates the younger woman’s space from above. Like before, she appears more like a silhouette, because of the missing light. Behind them, there is the glaring light of the lamp. (Image 4.3.4) After a clear cut, Gemma is filmed in a close-up, bowing over Wendy (Image 4.3.5), before she suddenly leaves the screen, puts a bible next to the younger woman, and leaves the room the same way and in the same shot she entered it. When she has left, Wendy cries, opens the bible and finds a heroin syringe in it. (Image 4.3.6) (Sons of Anarchy 2008)
Interpretation: The described scene is, as already mentioned, not the first scene Gemma appears in, but the first one where she reveals her tough side. In previous scenes, which show her, she is presented as a lovely mother and until the second half of this particular scene, she remains kind and friendly. This changes quickly and unexpectedly during their praying. The first hint, which introduces Gemma’s dangerous side through mise-en-scène is her back, which covers half of the screen. She appears like a shadow or a hidden spectator, who lurks at her victim. While Wendy still thinks herself save, Gemma is already ready to attack. Until this moment, she seems to truly care about Wendy, but this shot suddenly creates suspicion.
Another relevant action is the one when Gemma takes Wendy’s hand. Firstly, she enters the younger woman’s space in the shot itself and – even more significant – secondly, covers Wendy’s between her two hands and kind of catches her. Gemma marks her superior position and symbolizes that she is on top. The low angles she is constantly filmed in emphasize her power additionally.

Moreover, the backlight of the bedside lamp let her appear more like a silhouette or a shadow. Gemma appears almost completely in black. This effect increases the threat and danger she radiates. She comes across very frightening and unpredictable, because the audience cannot see her facial expression. When she starts to strangle Wendy, she penetrates her space unexpectedly and enters the screen like a dark and dangerous shadow. Gemma appears untouchable and mighty through the lack of color, mainly, because she hides and lurks in the dark before she attacks and gives her victims no chance to react. By contrast, SAMCRO’s matriarch can also appear extremely oppressive, when she presses Wendy down on her bed and tries to strangle her. She covers almost the entire screen and is very present and an obvious and graspable threat. Her appearance is both dangerous and brutal and loses the mysterious aspects she had in the shots before.

In this particular scene, the props carry meaning and have to be considered too. When Gemma hands over a bible to Wendy, after she attacked her, it firstly seems to be very strange and paradox. It is probably unlikely that she believes in God and follows the rules of Christianity. Charity and altruism is nothing Gemma would let Wendy benefit from, after she almost killed her grandson. This is why the act of giving her a bible seems inappropriate. On the other hand, by referring to Jesus and God, who are, according to Gemma, the only ones who could help Wendy, if she insisted on raising up her child, she highlights the fact that nobody else could challenge her. The connection between Gemma and God is remarkable and shows that she is not afraid of anything and will do everything in order to protect her family – and not even God could stop her. The second object, which is important, is the syringe Gemma put into the bible. She gives Wendy the advice to better kill herself, before she has to do it. Drugs and suicide are a huge contradiction to the beliefs of Christianity, but Gemma does not care about religion or higher forces. Her superior position is marked by not taking others – not even God – seriously and being unscrupulous as far as her family is concerned. (Sons of Anarchy 2008)
At the beginning of season two, rivals of SAMCRO set up Gemma and kidnap her in order to rape her. For a long time, she does not say anything, because she is well aware of the fact that both her husband and her son would revenge this crime. She does not want them to get arrested and keeps her secret. Towards the end of this season, Gemma accidentally sees the woman, who was part of the trap. She decides to follow her and her son’s girlfriend, Tara, joins her. The scene starts at the moment, the woman Gemma was following arrives at her house.

The first shot is a medium shot. Gemma’s car enters the screen from the right side. She drives her vehicle, while Tara sits next to her. Since this shot is filmed from aside, Gemma sits closer to the camera than her co-driver. (Image 4.3.7) The younger woman is hardly visible, but rather hidden behind SAMCRO’s matriarch. Gemma wears sunglasses, so her face itself is not completely visible either. Both women look straight ahead and watch the women they were following how she enters her house. This is also filmed in a long shot, showing her form far away from the windshield’s perspective. There are parts of Gemma on the left side of the screen, but not of Tara, although both are observing. (Image 4.3.8) After a clear cut, the car is filmed from the outside, coming closer to the camera. Behind them a member of SAMCRO follows them in order to support them on his motorcycle. Gemma parks her car and the camera turns to the long shot, observing the woman from the car’s perspective. This time, Gemma’s silhouette is more noticeable and takes more space of the screen. (Image 4.3.9) When both women are filmed again in a medium shot from aside inside the car, Gemma does not wear her sunglasses anymore. She keeps focusing on the woman, while Tara looks at her and tries to convince her not to rush. The younger woman is not well lighted and her face, especially, is rather dark. Gemma does not react, but stares straight ahead. (Image 4.3.10) In the following shot, the camera switches position and films Gemma from Tara’s perspective. In this over-the-shoulder shot, the audience can see the backside of Tara’s head and Gemma. This time, SAMCRO’s matriarch’s face is not well lighted. (Image 4.3.11) She tells Tara that she has to kill the woman, because all other members of SAMCRO will seek revenge and it is her duty to do her bit. During this conversation, Gemma does not look at her until she tells her that she loves her and that Tara has to take care of her son. (Image 4.3.12) This angle-reverse shot continues for a while, but after Gemma hugged the younger woman, she
leaves the car. In a medium long shot, she is filmed stepping out of the vehicle and coming towards the camera. She passes the car and Tara, leaving the screen, while Tara gazes after her together with the other member of SAMCRO, who came with them. The last shot of Gemma in this scene is a long shot, filming her from behind how she walks towards the house of the woman she is going to kill. (Sons of Anarchy 2009)

Interpretation: Lurking is apparently typical of Gemma and is illustrated through camera shots and angles in this scene too. There is a voyeuristic aspect in observing the woman, while she is not even aware that people are watching here. Besides, Gemma hides in the car and, at least in the beginning, behind her sunglasses. She
keeps focusing her victim throughout the whole scene. SAMCRO’s matriarch does not really listen to Tara and almost ignores her. She stays completely calm, focused and confident. Power and courage, but also cold-bloodedness and unscrupulousness are characteristics, which Gemma radiates in this scene. Her silhouette appears like a threat or, as in the first scene including her, a shadow, who lurks in waits to attack.

Moreover, Gemma is more present than her co-driver throughout the whole scene. Tara seems to almost disappear next to her. Apart from the fact that Gemma almost covers the younger woman’s face, SAMCRO’s matriarch enters the scene closer to the camera. Gemma occupies the whole attention of the viewers, which is also expressed through the lightning. When Tara’s face is actually shown, it is in the dark, while SAMCRO’s matriarch’s face is well lighted. This changes during the scene, but has a completely different reason: Since Tara’s face is not visible, the audience focuses on Gemma either way. She appears doubtful and it is hard to read out of her eyes what she might think or feel. It is suspicious and therefore Gemma looks dangerous and unpredictable. All these aspects lead to the assumption that she has power and people should better be careful, because she is not frightened of hurting or even killing somebody. (Sons of Anarchy 2009)

Scene 3: Gemma’s Revenge Part 2 (Season 2, Episode 13, 39:12-44:38)

The last scene presenting Gemma from Son’s of Anarchy (2009) is the second part of her revenge, where she actually kills the woman, who was also responsible for her getting raped. Due to various circumstances, it happens that a female police agent is inside the house of the woman too and has just shot the target’s boyfriend. The agent hides when she hears the young woman entering the house. Since Gemma is not part of this shots of the scene, the analysis starts the moment SAMCRO’s matriarch comes in through the front door. The woman is shocked, when she finds her dead boyfriend and takes out a gun, in order to protect herself and carefully looks for the murderer.

The first shot Gemma appears in is a medium shot of the agent, who still hides, and the woman, who has almost found her. In the background there is the front door, where SAMCRO’s matriarch comes in. Although the two other women are foregrounded, the focus is on Gemma, because the door is extremely lighted, due to the daylight, which shines in. The screen itself if cut into two halves, due to the wall the agent hides behind. The young woman stands in front of an open room and shares
her half with Gemma. (Image 4.3.13) The camera then comes closer to SAMCRO’s matriarch, filmed in a medium shot, while she targets her victim. Through the backlight, she appears very dark and is – again – not well lighted. The daylight, which shines in from outside, is almost blending. (Image 4.3.14) After a clear cut, the young woman is filmed while she turns around surprised by Gemma’s appearance. There are a few angle-reverse shots, showing both women – both not well lighted due to the backlight – looking at each other. SAMCRO’s matriarch orders the younger woman to lower her gun and turn around. Instead, she pretends to shoot herself, before she tries to kill Gemma. The moment she targets SAMCRO’s matriarch is filmed in a medium shot of Gemma, still pointing her gun at her, with parts of the younger woman on the left side of the screen – but Gemma is faster and kills her. The woman is filmed how she falls to the ground, before the camera films SAMCRO’s matriarch again when she lowers her gun and comes closer and looks down on the corpse.

After another clear cut, there is a close-up of the agent, who still hides behind the wall. When Gemma sits down and catches a breath, which is filmed in a medium shot from aside, the police agent comes out and points her gun at her. Gemma raises her hand protectively, which is filmed in a close-up, but keeps calm. In the next shot – a medium shot – the agent looks down on SAMCRO’s matriarch and targets her, while she orders Gemma to put the gun on the floor. Without averting her gaze on the agent, she executes the command. When all guns are collected, the agent passes Gemma and walks through the screen, while Gemma looks up and seems to be annoyed by the situation. (Image 4.3.15) By contrast, the police agent reacts rather nervously and not as calm and relaxed as Gemma. In the following conversation, which is filmed in angle-reverse shots, they talk about the rape and what they are going to do next. The agent sits down, which is filmed in a tilting shot, and tells Gemma to leave. SAMCRO’S matriarch’s reaction on this decision, which is a surprised one, is illustrated through a medium shot from aside. (Image 4.3.16) She looks straight ahead since the agent is on one eye level with her now, but when she stands up in order to go home, the police agent sets her up and accuses her of the murder of the man too. Again, an angle-reverse shot is used to film their conversation and again, Gemma keeps calm, leaning on the doorframe, while the agent points her gun at her. SAMCRO’s matriarch finally turns around and leaves the scene, before the agent is on screen again, while she walks through the house and calls for back up. (Sons of Anarchy 2009)
Interpretation: Throughout the entire scene, Gemma stays calm and does not lose her self-control – at least on the outside. Her performance highlights her strength and power, because not even a police agent, who points a gun on her, could upset her. Gemma’s facial expression and body language illustrate her fearlessness. Although the agent threatens her and looks down on her, she seems to be in the superior position and cannot be harmed. The camera angle changes toward the end of the scene until both women are on one eye level, because Gemma’s opposite sits down, which puts an even greater emphasis on SAMCRO’s matriarch’s powerful appearance. The police agent oppresses her, but, still, Gemma dominates during the entire scene and can assert herself, as far as techniques of mise-en-scène are concerned.

The lightning supports Gemma’s authority and draws all the attention to her. Before she actually enters the scene, the light in the background of the screen tells the audience immediately where to look at. Both other women fade into the background, even though they are foregrounded. SAMCRO’s matriarch’s appearance is literally highlighted. Moreover, the backlight lets Gemma appear dark and therefore it is not as easy to see her face and facial expression again. This leads to the effect that viewers can hardly predict her next action, because her face is not completely visible. The
darkness implicitly gives the audience the hint that she is not one of the good and fair-minded characters, but rather one of the dark side and dangerous. (Sons of Anarchy 2009)

2.4) The Exercise of Power through Mise-en-Scène

The striking question of this chapter is how all these definitions of power in chapter 3 and the analyses and interpretations of chapter 4 can be related to specific features of mise-en-scène. It has already been said that all three women – Cersei, Fiona and Gemma – tend to dominate the scene. Since the content itself is not significant for this part of this thesis, it is interesting to discover how power is exercised on screen. The question, which comes up now, is, how i.e. Cersei’s privileged position, Fiona’s control over subordinate groups or Gemma’s influence on the behavior of others is illustrated. Some characteristics are shared by all three of them and others are exclusively for one. After several analyses and interpretations of scenes from Game of Thrones (2012-2013), American Horror Story: Coven (2013) and Sons of Anarchy (2008-2009) in previous parts of this thesis, this chapter will sum up the main features of mise-en-scène, which are used to let them appear as women who exercise power.

2.4.1) Special Lightning

One feature of mise-en-scène, which plays an important role for all three analyzed roles, is the special lightning, which is used for their appearances. It adds meaning to their characters and draws the audience’s attention immediately to them. Cersei for example, dominates all analyzed scenes through the placements of the lights on the set. Her privileged position as a queen is illustrated by this feature and let her appear authoritative and more important than others. She controls not just the scene and the subordinate people around her, but also the viewers. The lack of lightning can be very expressive too, though. Keeping characters’ faces hidden in the shadow makes their next actions unpredictable and threatening. Lightning (or the lack of it) can influence the audience’s attention severely and highlight the privileged position of the role. It is clearly one of the most important techniques of mise-en-scène among others and is responsible for the illustration of a character’s supposed power.
2.4.2) Exclusive Clothes and Colors

When power is described as the privileged access to resources or wealth, Cersei from *Game of Thrones* (2012-2013) works as a very expressive example. Whenever she appears in a scene, the queen of Westeros distinguishes from all other people around her, due to her pompous clothes and the colors of House Lannister – red and gold. The same is true for Fiona Goode’s appearance in *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013). She uses to wear black all the time and makes the younger, subordinate witches of her coven to follow her dress code. Therefore, she influences and controls their behavior. The supreme does not care about their preferences, but forces them to follow her style. The colors and clothes chosen by the women put an emphasis on their superiority and either let them stand out from others or force subordinate people to adapt to their dress code. Moreover, the typical colors of the women act like a status symbol for them and highlight their uniqueness.

Besides, their clothes and colors continuously create a contrast between them and others or their surroundings. Gemma from *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-2009) is dressed not alike all other (and official) members of the motorcycle club SAMCRO since she is a woman and therefore differs anyway from all others. Nevertheless, she deals with this situation by wearing jeans instead of skirts all the time. Although she underlines her female features by, for example, preferring low necklines, her general appearance seems rather harsh and masculine in order to lower the differences to the (actual) dominating men around her. Cersei stands out with her red and golden clothes when she visits cold-colored Winterfell and Fiona Goode, wearing black, is dressed like a foreign body in her own coven, where everything is painted white.

As it has been mentioned before, there are different ways to exercise power, which is apparently also done by choosing the right clothes. Dependent on the situation and context, Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are presented in a powerful, independent or distinguished way.

2.4.3) Preference of Low Camera Angle

In order to present the characters strong, authoritative and dominant, it is a common technique of mise-en-scène to film them with a low camera angle. This can be ob-
served by looking at the analyzed and interpreted scenes in chapter three. All three female roles got a lot of screen time where they are filmed from below, which has the effect that they look literally down on others. Moreover, their opposites have to look up at them. There is an inequality in the hierarchy to be seen, when, for instance, Ed-dard Stark kisses Cersei’s hand in *Game of Thrones* (2012-2013) or Gemma looks down on the mother of her grandson before she attacks her in *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-2009). Fiona Goode from *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013) is illustrated similarly in her appearances: mostly from below, while her inferior witches are filmed from above. Power is clearly exercised through this technique and presents the women in a literally higher position than people around them.

**2.4.4) Close-Ups for Tense Moments**

All three analyzed female roles do not seem to avoid conflicts or fights, so suspenseful situations are unavoidable. When they do not get what they want, it is very likely that both Cersei, Fiona and Gemma will start a discussion. By denying them to exercise power and let them access their goals, they use to get angry and start to threaten their opposites or enemies. Their look becomes frightening and in order to underline this, the camera comes closer and closer to their face until there are close-ups on the screen. The more tense the discussion gets, the closer the camera comes. This is a common feature used to illustrate what happens if a person tries to prevent them from reaching their goals or resists on their domination. When their authority is questioned, the camera focuses on their threatening look, which leads to intimidation of their opposites, enemies or even the audience itself.

**2.4.5) Deliberately Avoiding to Look at Other People**

Action and performance is one of the most important aspects of mise-en-scène. The analyzed and interpreted scenes in the previous chapters are proof of how the behavior of certain characters can influence their appearance. One of the most common actions of all three analyzed roles is the deliberate avoiding of eye contact. This can have an extremely disrespectful effect and, especially during a dialogue, can be experienced humiliating. Cersei, Gemma and Fiona use to ignore their opposites or resist
looking them into their eyes while they speak. It is them who decide when to seek for eye contact, which puts them into the more powerful position throughout all scenes. Besides, they influence the situation and their opposites behavior, because the avoidance of looking at others creates insecurity in them. Since power can be exercised through actions, which are contrary to the other person’s interests, the behavior of the three roles can be considered as powerful, because it is likely that partners of a dialogue want them to have eye contact and not be ignored. Instead, Cersei, Gemma or Fiona tend to turn their backs to others or keep looking somewhere else while they have a conversation. They know how to mark their position and put others into the more inferior one.

### 2.4.6) Penetrating the Space of Others

The next way of how power is exercised through mise-en-scène is a mixture of action, the position of the camera and its angle. In order to give the impression that, due to their privileged position, all three women of the described series can do and take whatever they want, directors tend to illustrate them as the person who penetrates other’s space and not vice versa. This is presented in almost all of the used scenes of this thesis and can be practiced in different ways. The most common one is to let them enter the scene and leave it when they decide to. But there are also other ways, such as putting their hand into the screen, while someone else is filmed or even stepping in front of them, which prevents the audience to look at their opposites. In over-the-shoulder shots, it is apparently a technique to let powerful roles occupy most of the screen, so, although another character is filmed, the more dominate one steps in and takes most of the space. Gemma, for example, does not just enter the space of her opposite, but even rushes in from above and Cersei or Fiona use to come very close to other characters and therefore penetrate their personal space threateningly. Doing all this expresses huge dominance and intimidates other characters around them. It is out of question who is in the superior position and who is the subordinate group or person, when this technique of mise-en-scène is used.
2.4.7) Delaying the Presentation of a Character

It can be seen that characters, who seemingly possess power – or are at least presented as such – use to take their time to reveal themselves. They keep hidden from the audience for a time and are not presented entirely from the first moment on. Cersei, for example, waits until she leaves her carriage and in her first scene, she does not show her face immediately. Fiona Goode is the best example in this thesis, because she is presented very delayed. Firstly, the audience can see the car she is in, then her high heels, her umbrella, her back, her face from aside and finally, after minutes, her entire face. The use of shadows is also a technique of how to prevent the viewers from looking at them immediately. It is literally necessary to wait until they are presented until it is unavoidable to keep them hidden anymore.

2.4.8) Fear through Mise-en-scène

This subchapter is going to illustrate how certain elements of mise-en-scène can be combined in order to create fear in both the opposites and enemies of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma, and the audience. Since the three female roles are presented frightening and threatening, all of the three women use to dominate situation also by intimidating and oppressing others, which therefore leads to a powerful impression.

The definition of the word fear, according to the Oxford Dictionary would be “an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or harm”. As it is illustrated in many of the analyzed and interpreted scenes from Game of Thrones (2012-2013), American Horror Story: Coven (2013) and Sons of Anarchy (2008-2009), the depicted female roles are presented threatening and frightening through mise-en-scène during intense situations. Different genres have a variety of ways to let their audience experience fears. “The conventional narrative forms of the individual genres differ in time, place, lead and supporting characters, plots, themes, sequences of events, and set designs” (Wulff 43). The various dramaturgic and technical tools are also important for creating fear.

Still, there are common patterns in provoking fear. These include (in addition to light and sound effects) all techniques that open up a space external the
frame in which the content is unknown. It can contain a monster that has previously been introduced, or as yet unknown horror. (Wulff 1996: 43-44)

In all three series such elements can be found. Mise-en-scène offers many techniques to provoke fear and let Cersei, Fiona or Gemma appear as a huge threat. They may even create fear, when they are presented dangerous and sinister. In her scenes, Gemma, for example, is filmed in rather dark light and almost covered in shadows through the backlight. Her next actions are unpredictable, because it is hard to see her face or facial expressions, which might tell something about her intentions. She and Fiona even use physical violence. The supreme throws a younger witch of her coven against the wall, in order to punish her for being rude and Gemma tries to convince the mother of her grandson to kill herself, after choking her. Lord Baelish gets almost killed by Cersei’s guard, just because she wants to make a point, so apart from lightning, certain actions and performances themselves can create fear through mise-en-scène. Moreover, a person who attacks or tries to kill other people is hopefully something none of the viewers will have experience with. Something unknown, which is dangerous, provokes fear and let the presented female characters appear dominant, powerful and dangerous, because they are able to hurt others physically and psychically without warning.

“The staging of the experience of fear is amplified when the camera focuses on people who are obviously scared. This is a favored practice in such films as *Evil Dead II* […] or *The Exorcist* […]. Sometimes in these genres, darkness off screen is even portrayed as something protective. Generally, however, it is shown as something threatening and thereby corresponds to the spectator’s real fears of the dark, whether in the pitch black woods or in dark cellars.” (Wulff 1996: 44)

The opposites of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are very often frightened of them. There are many examples of close-ups of scared people, such as the looks of Lord Baelish, Wendy or Zoe, which can be seen on the images of the previous chapters. Their reactions to the three women’s performances underline the threat these women radiate and put them immediately in the superior and more powerful position. Through “emotional reactions (they are afraid), their gestures and facial expressions (they show fear), and their attempts to flee” (Wulff 1996: 44) the characters provoke fear in even the audience. “Whether the spectators are scared in this sequence depends on whether they interpret the situation as a scary one.” (Wulff 1996: 44) Most of the viewers will
probably claim that the chosen scenes are not necessarily scary, like a scene from a horror movie, but they may be afraid of their next actions. It is likely that they fear for another character’s life or show empathy for their enemies, who are filmed in close-ups, which show their suffering and fear. Through this technique of mise-en-scène, these women are not just illustrated as the people who exercise power, but also as vicious and unscrupulous characters, who are huge threats for others.

Interestingly, none of the series use darkness on the set itself, in order to create fear and let Cersei, Fiona or Gemma appear even more threatening. By contrast, even in intense or suspenseful scenes, where the three women have to assert themselves in order to mark their (supposed) position, the lightning on the set is rather bright. By contrast, all three of them use to occupy the spot, which is the brightest, which draws all the attention immediately to them. Still, darkness is used throughout the analyzed and interpreted scenes: Not on the set, but on the women’s faces. One half of Cersei’s face is covered in shadows in the very first scene she appears. This effect leads to a rather mysterious appearance, because it makes it harder for the audience to read out information through facial expressions. The same is true for Gemma, who sometimes even appears more like a shadow or silhouette, because she is not lighted at all. Back-light highlights this effect and increases the contrast between light and darkness. In another scene, which was analyzed and interpreted in the previous chapter, her upper half including her eyes, are darkened through shadows. It is not easy to pretend their next actions, because it is harder to read out something from their faces. Moreover, darkness has a scary effect either way and does most certainly not be used in these cases as a protective factor, as Wulff also mentions. Instead, it increases the threat these women radiate, which intimidates others and increases their domination and power.

3) Narrative Level

All the previous chapters of this thesis have proven the point that there are many methods to present female roles as powerful on the screens. Directors work with a variety of techniques in order to give the audience the impression of independent and mighty women who are maybe even on the same level of power like their husbands or male co-roles. It is necessary to consider Gemma’s, Cersei’s and Fiona’s position as
well and each of the matriarch of the motorcycle club SAMCRO, the queen of Westeros and the supreme of the coven is reputable and respected. All three of them own some strength and power and it would be a lie to deny it. Nevertheless, their positions alone do not last at all and depicting them as powerful women through certain methods of mise-en-scène is nothing less than an illusion in order to give the impression of equality between male and female roles as far as power is concerned. After discovering the fact why these women are considered to be strong and mighty (on screen), the second part of this theses will focus on the main reasons why neither Cersei, Fiona nor Gemma can be seen as forceful roles and most certainly not equal to the men around them. There are some stereotypical elements, which make it impossible for them to be independent.

Firstly, after an overview of definitions of stereotypes and discrimination, this thesis will focus on specific aspects of how they Cersei, Gemma and Fiona are discriminated on the narrative level. Therefore, this thesis will present a variety of definitions of the field of social psychology. This specific science is defined as “the scientific investigation of how thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others” (Allport 1954: 5) It is human behavior, beliefs, thoughts, intentions, attitudes, goals and reactions which are relevant for this part of this thesis. Social psychology helps to understand concepts of prejudice, discrimination and sexism. Therefore, definitions and explanations of this particular field are used.

The second focus will be on the circumstance that Cersei, Gemma and Fiona are mothers; a fact, which prevents them from being independent and, moreover, makes them vulnerable and therefore weak. Since psychoanalysis deals with unconscious psychological processes, it tries to explain deeply anchored desires and anxieties. The great challenge for infants and children to develop properly is highly dependent on its mother, because she is the first object in the world the child relates to. The thesis will present motherhood, as it is defined in the field of psychoanalysis and will continue with some normative concepts. It is the big misunderstanding that only women can ‘mother’ their infants, so sexual discrimination also takes place in the areas of ‘motherhood’ and psychoanalysis. It is the role of the ‘traditional mother’, which is still in people’s mind – maybe even unconsciously.
3.1) Stereotypes and Sexism – An Overview

Since women are presented in stereotypical ways, this chapter will give a brief overview over the main principles of stereotypes. According to social psychology, there are three guiding principles, which can be identified as follows: Stereotypes help to explain, are devices to save energy and are group beliefs, which are shared. (McGarty 2002: 2)

To start with the first principle – stereotyping is an aid to explanation – it can be said that “stereotyping is an instantiation of the categorization process. We cannot have an impression of a group unless we can tell the difference between the group and some other group.” (McGarty 2002: 3) The cognitive process by which we detect those similarities and differences is called categorization. The striking fact about stereotypes could be explained as the following:

[S]tereotype formation involves the perception or encoding of new information but it also enlists prior knowledge. Rarely is the mind a blank slate on which a fresh stereotype can be inscribed, but, continuing the analogy, its surface is marked with many well-worn grooves that make certain stereotypes more likely to appear. (McGarty 2002: 3)

The second guiding principle says that stereotypes are devices, which save energy, time and effort. I can be claimed that “treating people as group members saves energy because it means that we can ignore all of the devices and detailed information that is associated with individuals” (McGarty 2002: 4). This idea can be summarized:

Individual people have limited capacities to perform cognitive tasks such as processing information. Nevertheless they exist in a complex, multifaceted world that places enormous demands on that limited capacity. This complexity is certainly true of the social environment, and the resulting overload of human information processing capacity leads people to take shortcuts and to adopt biased and erroneous perceptions of the world. Stereotypes are simply one example of the biases that can develop. (McGarty 2002: 4)

Interpreting this statement negatively, stereotypes could be seen as aids to misunderstanding instead of understanding. Other approaches show that they are rather context-dependent and reflect group differences, which exist. “In other words, the possibility of processes by which stereotypes could form on some basis that was not large-
ly erroneous is excluded from consideration as part of the topic in a general review of the field” (McGarty 2002: 5). It is necessary to explore alternatives, including the fact that it is possible that stereotypes can be formed on the basis of information, which is valid. (McGarty 2002: 4-5)

According to McGarty, the third and last guiding principle is that stereotypes are shared group believes. This statement correlates with the simply assumption that a stereotype would attract hardly any attention when they are shared by just a small group of people. If all individuals had their own stereotypes of another group in mind then those stereotypes would not be interesting for others. “Shared stereotypes, for example, are useful for predicting and understanding the behavior of members of one group to another. If stereotypes are primarily interesting because they are shared it becomes important to understand why they are shared and how they come to be shared.” (McGarty 2002: 5) McGarty also suggests:

This is the idea that there is a shared cultural pool of knowledge, social representations, ideology or culture from which different people sample and it is this which products the commonality of views. However, this idea in turn ignores the reality that people’s views become similar to each other through mutual social influence: people systemically become more similar to or more different from each other. (McGarty 2002: 6)

All the members of a group therefore have the power to become more different or similar to each other, and it is the stereotyping, which needs to be capable of capturing this dynamism. (McGarty 2002: 6)

Before this thesis will shortly touch the question why and how stereotypes even form, there are a few more definitions given by Michael A. Hogg and Graham M. Vaughan in their book *Social Psychology* (2008):

People show an easy readiness to characterise vast human groups in terms of a few fairly crude common attributes. Stereotypes are slow to change. Stereotype change is generally in response to wider social, political or economic changes. Stereotypes are acquired at an early age, often before the child has any knowledge about the groups that are being stereotyped […]. […] Stereotypes become more pronounced and hostile when social tensions and conflict arise between groups, and then they are extremely difficult to modify. Stereotypes are not inaccurate or wrong; rather, they serve to make sense of particular intergroup relations. (Hogg; Vaughan 2008: 54-55)
Again, stereotypes are not explained as something completely negative, wrong or hostile. Still, they can be discriminating and humiliating. The question now is how and why they even arise. “There are two principal suggestions as to the ways in which stereotypes can emerge from expectancies. […] The first is that stereotypes may emerge from actual differences between groups.” (McGarty 2002: 10) If differences between groups are detected they may become magnified and accentuated.

The second possibility is that stereotypes may actually be self-fulfilling prophecies […]. Stereotypes may affect the ways that members of one group treat another and that in turn may lead to changes in behavior of the stereotyped group. Perceiving the members of some group as violent and dangerous may, for example, lead to hostile treatment of that group which may in turn lead to a violent response from the stereotyped group. (McGarty 2002: 10)

Finally, it can be claimed that “positive behaviours performed by a minority are considered to be less positive and negative behaviours performed by the majority are seen to be less negative following the process of social categorization which participants perform.” (McGarty 2002: 12) This leads to the assumption that the meaning of the stimulus information varies and changes in response to differentiation. (McGarty 2002: 12)

All these definitions of stereotypes are necessary to take into consideration when the three female roles – presented in the previous chapters – are analyzed on the narrative level. I personally hold the opinion that women are still the inferior group in contrast to their male counterparts in many aspects: Movies, series and similar medias included. The following sub-chapter is going to be a brief excursion to sexism and sex stereotypes, because despite the powerful presentation on screen, the roles of Cersei Gemma and Fiona from such discriminations which make them weaker and degrade them.

3.1.1) Sexism

Women are still one of the main target groups of prejudices and discrimination. This means that they are treated differently and are seen as an inferior group or simply the weaker sex. A traditional view of prejudice includes three components. They work on a cognitive, affective and conative level. In other words, “beliefs about the attitude
object” (Hogg 2008: 351), “strong feelings (usually negative) about the attitude object and the qualities it is believed to possess” (Hogg 2008: 351) and “intentions to behave in certain ways towards the attitude object (the conative component is an intention to act in certain ways, not the action itself” (Hogg 2008: 351).

Prejudice knows no cultural or historical boundaries – it is certainly not the exclusive province of people who are middle-aged, White, heterosexual or male. Human beings are remarkably versatile in being able to make almost any social group a target of prejudice. However, certain groups are the enduring victims of prejudice because they are formed by social categorizations that are vivid, omnipresent and socially functional, and the target groups themselves occupy low power positions in society. (Hogg 2008: 353)

Such groups with a lower position are based on age, ethnicity, race, sexual preference and – most importantly for this thesis – sex.

Research on sexism is focused on discrimination and prejudice against women almost entirely. “This is because women have historically suffered most as the victims of sexism – primarily because of their lower position relative to men in business, government and employment.” (Hogg 2008: 353) However, it has to be taken into consideration that stereotypical sex roles have persisted, because they have provided women with interpersonal and dyadic power, while they still provide men with structural power. (Hogg 2008: 353)

3.1.2) Sex stereotypes

Whenever research on sex stereotypes has been done, the results revealed that both women and men claimed that women are expressive and warm, while men are the competent and independent sex. In his article Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, S.T. Fiske points out: “The typical woman is seen as nice but incompetent, the typical man as competent but maybe not so nice.” (Fiske 1998: 377) Such a belief has cross-cultural generality. This kind of stereotype prevails in America, Australia, Europe and in the Middle East. (Hogg 2008: 353)

In social psychology it became common to represent sexes in terms of subtypes. There has been research, which identifies four dominant subtypes of women: the sexy woman, the housewife, the athlete/lesbian/feminist and the career woman. They emphasize competence versus interpersonal dimension. “The typical woman is
closest to the housewife or sexy woman subtype. Male subtypes are less clear-cut, but the two main ones are businessman and macho man. Here the emphasize is very much on the competence dimension.” (Hogg 2008: 354) The research illustrates that both women and men claim that women are a more homogeneous group. Earlier studies done by Boverman and colleagues in 1970 came to the following conclusion:

Both male and female clinicians described a healthy adult man and a healthy adult person in almost exactly the same terms (reflecting competence). The healthy adult woman was seen to be significantly more submissive, excitable and appearance-oriented, characteristics not attached to either the healthy adult or the healthy man. It is ominous that women were not considered to be normal, healthy adult people! (Hogg 2008: 354)

Traditionally, the two sexes occupied different sex roles in our society, although social psychological research has already indicated that the number of systematic differences between men and women are just a few and are not diagnostic at all. Still, the media uses to present women stereotypically. On TV, they very often have a purely decorative function and are seen as romantic/sexual entertainment. The term ‘faceism’, coined by Archer, Iritani, Kimes and Barrios in 1983, is a good example to “describe the way in which depictions of men give greater prominence to the head, while depictions of women give greater prominence to the body” (Hogg 2008: 356).

As it can be seen in chapter 3 of this thesis, which is an analysis of what is shown on screen in great detail, the directors of the three different series do not focus on the female role’s body and ignore their faces. By contrast, powerful women’s faces, such as the ones of Cersei, Gemma or Fiona gain a lot of attention by presenting the audience a big amount of close-ups. Since sexism and sex stereotypes have become a big issue in our society and is still a problem, which is not solved, the discrimination of women is maybe harder to detect and thus to combat. As it has been claimed in the beginning of this paper, it is necessary to look closer to the role and viewers must not simply believe and trust what they literally see. It is not enough to accept strong and powerful appearances on screen while the role itself is restricted to traditional stereotypes, which deny complete equality between the sexes. After presenting definitions of stereotypes, sexism and sex stereotypes, this thesis will now continue having a closer look to the content of the TV-series itself in order to detect discrimination of allegedly powerful women on screen.
3.1.3) Discrimination of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma on the Narrative Level

Before there will be examples of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma, this chapter is going to start with general stereotypical presentations of the three women. As it has been mentioned before, stereotypes are a help to explain certain things. ‘Another’ group gets identified and characterized by looking for differences to the own one. It can be claimed that women – unfortunately still the inferior group in all of the three TV-series – are the ‘other’ group in this case, so Cersei, Gemma and Fiona, among others, represent the omnipresent, but inferior group/sex in contrast to the male roles. The shared group belief that women are the weaker sex is still topical and therefore a proof of how slow such prejudice can change. All of the series were released approximately in 2010 and continue to be sexual discriminative and withheld the female roles from being as acknowledged as men’s.

The first female character, who gets discriminated because of her sex, is Cersei Lannister. On the US-website www.thedailybeast.com, the entertainment correspondent Amy Zimmerman wrote in her article “The Abused Wives of Westeros: A Song of Feminism in ‘Game of Thrones’” the following about Cersei:

Cersei Lannister, the conniving, beautiful former queen of the Seven Kingdoms, is a highly visible figure in King’s Landing; she can often be spotted plotting, scheming, and feuding with powerful men. But despite her façade of influence and autonomy, Cersei is actually one of the most tragic characters on Game of Thrones. Married off to a man, Robert Baratheon, who is in love with another, she finds herself scorned and alone. Robert belittles and abuses Cersei, both physically and emotionally. In Season 1 he slaps her full across the face and threatens to keep hitting her if she speaks out of turn again. While Cersei finds love and comfort in the arms of her twin brother, Jaime, he similarly casts her in a position of inferiority and powerlessness. (Zimmerman 2014)

Even though Cersei owns one of the highest positions of the kingdom of Westeros, she does not get her title due to any competences she requires, but simply through marriage. She is well aware of the fact that a woman, by contrast to men, has not the same possibilities or ways to achieve any goals, when she tells Sansa, her future daughter-in-law, that “Tears aren’t a woman’s only weapon. The best one’s between your legs. Learn how to use it” (Game of Thrones 2013). There is no worshipping of
her being competent at all. Her father, Tywin Lannister, decided to marry her to King Robert Baratheon, who won the battle against the Mad King – and therefore deserves his title due to his competences – while Cersei has no opportunity to do any choices of her life by herself. When Robert dies, her father forces her again to marry another man she does not love without asking her. Besides, Cersei’s inferiority is also highlighted when she has no actual power to make any decisions at court. In order to avoid this circumstance, she has to intrigue and manipulate others – another factor, which let her role appear automatically biased. When the decision of sending her daughter to another kingdom falls, Cersei has no say either, so it can be claimed that she, as a woman, is mostly voiceless in her life-choices, although she is the queen.

Moreover, she has no right and fair chance to fight back the physical or emotional abuse. In general, as it is also mentioned in the previous chapter, negative behavior of inferior groups is considered to be even more negative, while negative actions of the superior group are seen to be less negative than they actually are. The same is true for Cersei, who, among others, represents the group of women – the inferior group – whose behavior is considered to be even more negative than it is. There is, for example, hardly any attention paid to her in the scene Robert Baratheon hits her directly in her face, but when she decides to revenge the longstanding abuse, betrayal and rejection by making him drunk in order to get killed by a boar during hunting, she reveals herself as one of the main antagonists of the series. Since, according to social psychology, women are commonly seen as nice and not so competent, she may extract from the picture of a ‘typical woman’ not by being competent, but by not being nice. Taking the four typical female roles into consideration, Cersei is not eventually a concrete housewife, but rather fits in the role of the ‘sexy wife of her husband’ and therefore supports the traditional female roles instead of the ‘unconventional’ such as career woman or feminist/athlete/lesbian. As far as her wardrobe is concerned, it can be suggested that she is a rather an appearance orientated character than competence oriented which also supports the sexual discrimination.

The same factors are true for Fiona Goode. The supreme of the coven does not stand out because of her competences. She became the leader of her younger witches through determination and even if her magical powers as a witch are considered to be a reason to call her ‘competent’: They are magical and mystical powers and not necessary or essential for the real life. Moreover, in order to reach the position of the supreme faster, she killed the former one, which makes her way up to the leader any-
thing but honest, respectable or reputable. She – as a woman and a witch – is a representative for the ultimate ‘other’ and even has to hide herself and her powers due to her ‘otherness’ in order to be safe from witch hunters and protect her witches. However, she is the strongest witch of her generation, but has to defend her title and get rid of the new and younger supreme, because otherwise she has to retire and make space for her follower. Fiona urges to stay young and attractive, so she is appearance oriented, while her competences as a witch are taken for granted anyway. On the website www.the-humanexperience.com, the writer Francesca Lewis points out in her article “5 Ways ‘American Horror Story: Coven’ Both Conforms to and Challenges Misogynistic Tropes” the following:

_AHS: Coven_ conforms to this trope with Fiona Goode’s vanity. She may be the Supreme of the coven and brimming with power and talent and sass and, y’know, insane hotness, but sadly, she is also aging, a fate worse than death as far as she is concerned. She will cheat and lie and kill, just to slow, stop or reverse the inevitable process. Many feminist viewers felt that Fiona’s impressive power was somewhat undermined by this tragic flaw, which seemed to pander to popular notions about beauty and age. (Lewis 2016)

Surrounded by many younger members of the coven, it is hard for her to keep up with them optically. Reaching eternal life is Fiona’s greatest wish, so she does not back off from anything in order to get it. Besides, the supreme has to be harsh and violent in order to reach her goals and stay on top. Therefore, she has to plan many intrigues and manipulate people around her, which makes a mean character out of her. Again, she is not so nice, but not necessarily competent in the usual way either.

Since almost exclusively girls and other women –both fair-minded and evil ones – surround Fiona, the cast is dominated by female roles. The supreme may dominate her female witches, but the moment the Axeman, played by Danny Huston, joins the series, she takes over a rather passive role. He becomes her lover and Fiona’s focus is on being attractive for him and it is her sudden intention to seduce and get seduced. Her longing for beauty, attractiveness and youth make her a sexy woman, who takes care of her coven and fosterlings. Again, her character is far away from a career woman or the athlete/feminist/lesbian, but rather positioned in the fields of sexy woman and housewife. Fiona Goode follows a traditional, stereotypical and discriminating image of women. Despite her appearance on screen, her role is actually not in the superior position due to her sex.
The last female role, which is presented powerfully on screen but is discriminated instead, is the one of Gemma Teller Morrow. Like Cersei and Fiona, she is in an actual high position – in her case, she is the wife of the leader of the motorcycle club SAMCRO. Again, she achieved her status through marriage and does not have to be a competent human being at all. Apart from Gemma’s husband, son and grandson, the whole club appears to be her family, so her role is actually reduced to a housewife. As the matriarch of SAMCRO, she takes care of her ‘children’ and even experiences emotional and physical abuse, such as a rape. Paradoxically, Gemma is no official member of the club, because of the discriminating fact that she is a woman. Whenever she appears in the garage of the club, she works at the office and is therefore separated from the men. Apart from this ‘job’, SAMCRO’s matriarch uses to stay at home and, like Cersei and Fiona, has to plan intrigues and follow a criminal path in order to reach her goals or protect the club. Therefore, Gemma is not the ‘typical woman’ in the sense of warm and expressive, but still not independent or competent like men, though.

One of the most striking peculiarities of Gemma’s role is her extraordinary position as a woman in the club. As mentioned before, she is not allowed to be an official member and does not get the chance to decide any actions of the club, but nevertheless, Gemma is SAMCRO’s matriarch and takes care of the club. Even so, by being a woman, she represents the absolute minority and is in the inferior position. Like in the case of Cersei, her negative behavior – as the one of the minority – is considered to be more negative than it actually is. Although they are the protagonists of the series, SAMCRO’s members, including Gemma’s son, brutally knock down others in a regular manner, kill other people, deal with drugs and guns, treat almost all other women as sex objects, rob out other gangs and break the law regularly. None of these actions are seen as wrong or despising. By contrast, when the police arrest one of the members, it is presented as something pitiful. At the beginning of the series, one member hid two Mexican prostitutes in the basement and when a fire broke out, both died painfully and agonizingly, but there is hardly any attention paid to these horrific deaths. Instead, the whole situation is presented in a complicated way for the member of SAMCRO and how he hopefully get away with it before the corpses attract attention. What all these examples result in, is the fact that all of this behavior is considered to be less negative, because men – and therefore the majority – are responsible for it. Meanwhile, all negative and criminal actions of Gemma – a woman and
therefore the minority – are presented in a significantly more negative way. Her criminal actions are not illustrated as a great achievement or win for the club, but rather as selfish and vicious actions and once again, the female role has no other opportunity to intrigue and manipulate behind others backs in order to achieve her goals, which are, in Gemma’s case, mostly the ones for the club anyway.

Although Gemma is doing a lot for SAMCRO and tries to please her husband, who is the leader of the club, he does not appreciate her the way she deserves. By contrast, in season 1, he betrays her with a much younger girl at a party. On the website www.the-artifice.com, the contributing writer Amanda Dominguez-Chio claims in her article “Sons of Anarchy: Analyzing Masculinity”:

One of the pivotal characters is Gemma Teller-Morrow. If this series has taught audiences anything, it’s that Gemma would do anything to protect her family. That being said, most of her actions are on behalf of the men in her life. At first glance, Gemma Teller commands attention, carrying a gun, arguing her way out of a situation, and proving to everyone that she can save herself. As a strong woman, Gemma represents “the potential to challenge and undermine female gender roles by appropriating the characteristics of toughness generally associated with the masculine” (154). But does Sons of Anarchy truly portray a strong woman who is equal to the men of SAMCRO? The women are expected to be faithful to their men, but the rules do not necessarily apply to the men: Clay, for example, was able to have sexual relations with Cherry. Kerry Fine states that “the man ‘owns’ and controls the women’s sexuality, but she does not own or control his” (163). (Dominguez-Chio 2014)  

Gemma is presented in a very stereotypical way, which is discriminating for female roles on TV and women in general. There is a lack of confidence, independence and competence-orientation to be found in the roles of Cersei, Gemma and Fiona. In place of letting them achieve their goals through being competent, they have to rely on their appearance and intrigues in order to be successful (and fail in the end anyway). Strong mature female roles are supposed to go questionable, often criminal ways to stay in their position since they have reached them, while men can simply rely on real competences. All three examples are positioned between the sexy woman and the housewife, no matter how carefully these images are camouflaged. Even the queen of Westeros, the supreme of the coven or the matriarch of the motorcycle club SAMCRO have no part in decision-making and are voiceless, because they got their

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6 The two quotes mentioned in the statement of Dominguez-Chio are from the following resource:
Fine, Kelly. “She Hits Like a Man, but She Kisses Like a Girl: TV Heroines, Femininity, Violence, and Intimacy.” Western American Literature 47.2 (2012): 153-173.
status or title by predetermination or marriage. None of them is a career woman and most certainly no feminist/athlete/lesbian. The only factor, which differs from the stereotypical and traditional image of women, is the attribute ‘nice’. There is apparently no reason for a woman who possesses any kind of power to be gentle anymore, but rather cruel – but still not competent or independent. Needless to say, apart from Cersei, Gemma and Fiona, there are many more roles played by seemingly powerful females who unfortunately appear to be victims of sexual discrimination on the second look. After this very general presentation of definitions of stereotypes, sexual discrimination and how they are expressed in the roles of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma, there is one special stereotype this thesis will focus on, which all three of them have in common: As mature, heterosexual women, they are mothers.

3.2) Motherhood – A Weakening Factor of Female Roles

In the previous chapter, there is a lot of proof that neither Cersei, Fiona nor Gemma possess actual power at all – at least not as much as the audience believes through all the impressions they receive through certain techniques of mise-en-scène. There is one specific factor, which all of the female roles have in common: They are mothers. Firstly, this circumstance does not seem particularly important or inconvenient, but it is significant for their position. I personally claim that their children are one of the main reasons why all three roles became weaker because they are depicted as caring mothers. Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are responsible for their sons and daughters and, moreover, they make them depend and most certainly vulnerable. Before this thesis will have a closer look at the roles of the three analyzed women as mothers, some theoretical foundations of motherhood in psychoanalysis are presented.

3.2.1) Motherhood in Psychoanalysis

A good point to start is to mention the legend of Oedipus, which is one of the most popular narratives in Greek mythology. Oedipus unwittingly kills his father and later marries his mother. His legend is the name giver of one of Freud’s central traditional theories and later evoked criticism of his work. The focus of research has undoubtedly been on the father and its relationship to the father. (Schuster 1997)
The position of Jocasta, Oedipus’ mother, was significantly less important. For decades, she assigned a secondary role in the drama. Women/Mothers assigned an influential and decisive role in an infant’s personal development. Nevertheless, they do not get a lot of attention in classical and traditional Lacanian or Freudian psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freund was convinced that gender and sexual differentiation are biologically determined, motherhood serves the ultimate goal of reproduction and the even predetermined result of female development. By contrast, Jacques Lacan claimed that motherhood is permanently reduced to the threat that the entire presence of any mother poses to her infant. (Ruhs 2010)

What both Freud and Lacan have in common, is the suggestion that the pre-oedipal relationship between a child and its mother is rather a ‘pre-phase’. In the period of psychosexual development, the preoedipal is the preceding period of the Oedipus complex itself. During this phase, a child’s attachment to the mother is more dominant. A child’s psychosexual development can only begin after the mother is no longer a potential danger, because they finally have surpassed their preoedipal relationship. The father figure becomes more and more essential and is the centre of attention. Children may learn how to identify with the same sex parent and overcome desires, which are incestuous. The mother herself is exclusively defined in terms of lack of masculinity and the absence of a phallus. She is no longer important as far as her marginal role in the child’s development is concerned and either way put in an inferior position in contrast to the father. (Schuster 1997)

Moreover, she is the responsible person for the infant’s incestuous desires and encourages regression. Every undesirable development seems to happen due to the mother. Freud himself denied the direct responsibility of the mothers, but the conception of the Oedipus complex certainly led to the blaming of them. Libidinal phantasies and projections, which go from the child to the parent, were Freud’s main concerns. He did not pay much attention to the parental behavior has on the infant’s personality formation. Mothers are rendered the maternal Other or simply the object. There is a symbolic representation of the absence of her phallus through the fact that the mother is granted a subject position only in the desire for her infant. (Schuster 1997)

One of the main problems of psychoanalysis with the concept of motherhood are explained by Naomi Segal as follows:
[...] even when paternalistic it always views motherhood from the child’s position, whether current or recollected [...]. Where the mother is studied, her position of power is seen through a child’s retrospective gaze, which makes it difficult either to incorporate her political powerlessness or to take seriously the rational and conscious procedure of mothering. (Segal 1992: 267)

According to Luce Irigaray, a feminist psychoanalysis, there is even more to criticize. She claims that simply due to its phallocentric and patriarchal bias there is “a social order which does not acknowledge what it owes to the mother.” (Irigaray 1985: 178) Already in 1928, Melanie Klein mentioned in her essay “Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict” in the work *Love, Guilt and Reparation, and Other Works, 1921-1945* that it is necessary to establish mothers as central parental figures. She drew attention to the relationship between mother and infant during the pre-oedipal phase and also to the body of the mother, which had both not been of interest so far. (Klein 1928: 417)

Klein also suggested that the first and only one responsible for the role of the caring parent is the mother and, moreover, argues that women’s roles in society are primarily caretakers of their children. (Whitford 1992: 192) As it can be seen, these roles are very stereotypical. In 1940, influenced by Klein, Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby continued the work on maternal care and attachment. Their approach towards the relation between mother and infant was new. In contrast to previous research, Winnicott and Bowlby put their focus on a mother’s responsibility for and her relationship towards the child. Finally, psychoanalysis included motherhood in its investigations. Nevertheless, the mother’s position was still not an improved one. Unfortunately, the situation became worse when Winnicott introduced the concept of the “good enough mother” (Winnicott 1971: 10), who does not necessarily have to be the infant’s own mother. She “is one who makes active adaption to the infant’s needs, an active adaption that gradually lessens” (Winnicott 1971: 10). This happens “according to the infant’s growing ability to account for failure of adaption and to tolerate the results of frustration” (Winnicott 1971: 10). According to him, the health of children’s psychic lives correlate with what a mother’s responsibilities actually are and should be. Needless to say, the satisfaction of a child’s bodily does not cover all of the infant’s needs. Winnicott suggests that a mother must “provide an environment in which complex but essential processes in the infant’s self can be completed” (Winnicott 1975: 160).
By summarizing Winnicott’s views, Adams comes to the following conclusion that it is a mother’s main task to support her children to create its ego…

[…] on the basis of the infant’s experiencing a ‘continuity of being’ [and] to guarantee this personal continuity of the child. […] [T]he mother has to provide security and illusion at the same time, the illusion of security, by allowing the infant to experience the world as its creation and under its control. (Adams 1990: 320-321)

Moreover, mothers are the linking element between a child’s internal and external reality. In Through Pediatrics to Psychoanalysis: Collected Papers, Winnicott further mentions that infants eventually move “towards and beyond primary identification, unless there is a good enough mother” (Winnicott 1975: 237) if they do not surpass their “transitional phase” (Winnicott 1975: 237) successfully. To sum up, during infancy, mothers’ actions are the exclusive factor for children’s developments into coherent human beings, who are mentally sound, which makes the mother the only responsible person, if the infant does not develop properly.

Another problematic aspect, as far as Winnicotts’ views are concerned, is his lacking consideration of the social. According to Adams, a mother’s “biological orientation has already prepared her for her baby” (Adams 1990: 319). This relates to the assumption that the biological mother is the person, who is most qualified for maternal care of her infant. Winnicott himself neither doubted nor questioned that “naturally […] the infant’s own mother is more likely to be good enough” (Winnicott 1971: 10), although he officially neglected the equality of the social construct of maternity and biological motherhood. However, he does not believe that a mother has to intellectually comprehend her actions, because “in order to succeed in her task a mother need not be clever” (Winnicott 1975: 220).

It can be seen in all the different approaches that mothers seem to exist exclusively as part of the mother-child dyad. It was Winnicott who pointed out that “there is no such thing as a baby” (Winnicott 1975: 99), which means that the existence of a baby itself implies a mother’s existence, who cares for her infant. Reversing this statement slightly will change the meaning tough: There are no such ‘things’ as mothers without babies.
3.2.2) Normative Concepts of Mothers

One of the most essential problems, as far as motherhood is concerned, is the still existing strong association between mothering or motherhood and all biological concepts and claims. Women’s mothering is commonly seen as something natural, because they are the sex who bears children. With only a few exceptions, mothers are thought to be women. At the same time, this leads to the assumption that almost all women are associated with ‘mother’ or ‘motherhood’. As Chodorow points out in her work *The Reproduction of Mothering*, by talking about motherhood, it is often ignored that “all women do not mother or want to mother, and all women are not ‘maternal’ or ‘nurturant’” (Chodorow 1999: 215). There is no concrete differentiation between mothering and biological motherhood. The first one includes the act of childcare, which most certainly does not apply to all biological mothers, while not all mothers, who give birth to child automatically ‘mother’. Women will have to face accusations, conflicts and claims until there is no distinction between the belonging to a specific gender and sex and mothering, which includes both the social function and the physical ability. Motherhood is not a term exclusively tied to women’s bodies. (Chodorow 1999: 215)

Furthermore, Chodorow demands to “separate child care from childbearing, nurturing as an activity from pregnancy and parturition” (Chodorow 1999: 16), as a starting point in order to find a new formulation of the term motherhood. The disassociation of woman and mother, birth giving and childcare and maternalness from femininity is necessary. The philosopher Sara Ruddick questioned the claim that women are supposed to take better care of children than men by pointing out the following in her work *Mütterliches Denken: Für eine Politik der Gewaltlosigkeit*: “Weder für den Mann noch für die Frau ist es ‘natürlicher’, Mutter zu sein; sie ist dazu auch nicht stärker verpflichtet als er […]” (Ruddick 1993: 39). Additionally, in her article “Thinking about Fathers”, Ruddick claims that “any man or woman can assume the responsibilities […] of maternal work, whatever his or her relationship to the birth-giver of the children they tend” (Ruddick 1990: 227). She is convinced that neither men nor women are better suited for none of them is predestined for it. According to Ruddick, the association of mothering and biological motherhood must be treated with some reservation, because this would support the assumption that mothers are all
female figures. It is questionable whether the capacities of lactation or women’s potential of childbearing make all the difference between the two sexes. (Ruddick 1990: 229)

Moreover, neither an evolutionary-functionalist nor a biological account “provide[s] a convincing argument […] for why women, or biological mothers, should or must provide parental care” (Chodorow 1999: 21). Chodorow also argues that…

[…] there is nothing in parturient women’s physiology which makes them particularly suited for […] child care, nor is there any instinctual reason why they should be able to perform it […]. Nor is their anything biological or hormonal to differentiate a male “substitute mother” from a female one. (Chodorow 1999: 30)

It is the biological mother, who is dismissed from her obligated role of maternal care and makes room for others to enter and step in. All the statements illustrate that there is no reason to believe that men would function worse than women as mothers. Chodorow asks for a “system of parenting in which both men and women are responsible” (Chodorow 1999: 219). Her thoughts are based on the belief that the final outcome in the development of identity and self – for both boys and girls – would be different, if men are more involved in primary childcare. The role of the ‘father’ is also important, because according Chodorow:

[…][f]athers are supposed to help children to individuate and break their dependence on their mothers. But this dependence on her, and this primary identification, would not be created in the first place if men took primary parenting responsibilities. (Chodorow 1999: 218)

Having a closer look to this conviction, there are assumptions, which have to be taken into consideration. Firstly, it has to be assumed that both parents are heterosexual and secondly, the man has to be generally available to take care of the child. Nowadays, it is common for families to consist of two gay parents and divorced parents are nothing unusual, so it is not for every family so simple to fulfill these premises.

The feminist theorist Adrienne Rich criticizes this prevalent view, by referring to the fact that…

Heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution – even, or especially, by those individuals who feel they are
According to Rich, there is a failure in feminist psychoanalysts “to deal with lesbian existence as a reality […] or with the institution of heterosexuality itself as a beachhead of male dominance” (Rich 1980: 633). Most of the feminist psychoanalytic accounts of motherhood are built in the basis of the presupposition of female heterosexuality. By assuming that the sexual preference of women is heterosexuality, the patterns of rather traditional views of psychoanalysis are supported. This leads to the consequences that limits are set to the studies of motherhood.

### 3.2.3) Cersei, Fiona and Gemma: Three ‘Traditional’ Mothers

When the analyzed scenes of chapter 4 are taken into consideration, it is hard to believe that Cersei, Fiona and Gemma follow the role of a ‘traditional’ mother, but in fact all three of them do. The definitions and insights in psychoanalysis and normative concept of motherhood of the previous chapter present many similarities between ‘traditional’ concepts of motherhood and their way to be a mother. In the TV-series, all three of them have one particular thing in common: They are the only caretakers of their children and their identity is defined by being a mother. Apart from being female, motherhood is the next characteristic, which limits their freedom, autonomy and independency.

To start with, motherhood is tied to the female body in *Game of Thrones* (2012-2013), *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013) and *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-2009) and not a single male role takes any responsibility for the children. Cersei, the queen of Westeros, gave birth to two sons and a daughter. Since her twin brother, Jaime, is the actual father, which is her biggest secret, he does not get the chance to ‘mother’ the children and her husband, King Robert, who believes to be the father, does not take care of them at all. Neither Jaime nor the king supports Cersei in raising them and the same is true for Fiona and her daughter. In her case, there is no father around at all and never been mentioned either. The supreme of the coven is exclusively responsible for her daughter and, moreover, somehow ‘mothers’ her younger witches too. She proves that it is not necessary to be the biological mother and although she is not the best caretaker of them and has many arguments with her daugh-
ter, she defends them from enemies from the outside. Her case is similar to the one of Gemma, who protects her son Jax from any harm and cares for the members of SAMCRO, as if they were her own children. The concept of motherhood is tied to the female body in *Sons of Anarchy* (2009) again, because her son’s father is already dead and her new husband does not really take care of Jax either. In all three series, there is no male person who ‘mothers’ the children and the three women are alone. None of the men is a father figure to them either, who helps them to break the children’s dependence of the mothers – which would not have been necessary if they took any responsibilities in the first place. Moreover, the only ones who are made accountable for the children’s development is them. Cersei’s, Fiona’s or Gemma’s performance as a mother influenced their sons’ and daughters’ psychic life, while the male roles are seen to be blameless. Every undesirable development is the result of the actions of the mother and never the father or a male mother figure.

As mentioned before, Fiona and Gemma guarantee security for their children and so does Cersei. It is them who protect their sons and daughters and even widens their circle of the family and include others, such as witches from the coven or members of SAMCRO. It can be claimed that it is their main task in life, which restrict their role significantly, because none of the men bothers to do the same, but live independently. Motherhood makes them vulnerable, because their children are their leverage. Traditionally, it is the women’s role to primarily be a mother and the caretaker of the children. Needless to say, in order to fulfill the picture of the traditional mother, all of them are heterosexual.

The concepts of motherhood came a long way and underwent a lot of development. It is may not seen as the simple lack of masculinity anymore and allows women to be a central parental figure, but still stereotypes women and widely ignores men. As it is shown in the cases of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma, they are female, heterosexual women who are exclusively responsible for their children’s psychic health and well-being. Their main task is to protect their sons and daughters and motherhood is a big part of their whole personality and even identity. Without their children, they would be without a purpose in life. The whole representation of them as mothers is stereotypical and sexual discriminative, because their roles are far away from being independent, autonomous and equal to their male counterparts. Restricting women to being primarily a mother is outdated and sexist.
4) Embodied Performances of Gender

Through certain techniques of mise-en-scène, Cersei, Gemma and Fiona are presented strong, harsh and dominant on screen. By having a closer look on the content, it turns out that their appearance is deceptive. There is another aspect, which undermines their equality and highlights female stereotypes: Their embodied performance. These performances “include pose, repose, and actions such as standing, sitting, and walking” (Migdalek 2015: 7). All three women move and act stereotypically female, which is not much of a question of ‘performance in the way it is meant in Gibb’s work Mise-en-scène: Film style and Interpretation (2002), but on a more essential level.

What is considered to be feminine and masculine, and how feminine or masculine embodiment may be perceived differently when performed by bodies of different size, shape, muscularity, or biological sex, is culturally dependent […]. (Migdalek 2015: 7)

This thesis will focus on a Western culture and its concept of femininity, but first some terms have to be defined. Embodiment is what is manifested “through the body and over which human beings have some form of corporeal government” (Migdalek 2015: 6). Choreography is “[w]hat a body does in finite terms such as bodily gestures and movement” (Migdalek 2015: 6), while performance is “[t]he style, disposition, or manner in which choreography is executed” (Migdalek 2015: 6). Since a person’s embodiment is naturally given and hard to change, the choreography and, most importantly, the performance can be significantly influenced. Jack Migdalek points out that there are commonly shared expectations of how men and women perform. His “definitions for ‘feminine’ are gentle, graceful, delicate, soft, pliant; and my definitions for ‘masculine’ are strong, forceful, powerful, unyielding” (Migdalek 2015: 7). Clearly, he is aiming “for social change in which embodied performance is not constricted or restricted according to an individual’s assumed biological sex” (Migdalek 2015: 7), but this change has not happened rudimentarily yet. As long as women’s performances consists of passive restraint, which has the purpose of looking lovely and delicate, while (stereotypically) male performances are active, purposeful and targeted, there, again, is sexual discrimination involved, because it puts women, who act by force of habit (stereotypically) female, in the inferior and less competence-
oriented position. It can be claimed that the stereotypical female way to perform/move/act is appearance-oriented.

Having a look at the performances of Cersei, Fiona and Gemma, it can be observed that despite the aggressive and violent behavior – in both physical or psychological ways – all three women use to stay delicate, gentle and graceful during their actions. When Fiona attacks one of her younger witches (as it can be seen in chapter 4.2.2), the supreme just moves her hand gracefully and does not appear physically forcefully or unyieldingly. Cersei walks, sits or moves softly and delicately, whenever she appears on screen and even Gemma, who has a harsher appearance than the other two, distinguishes visibly from the men around her by having a less forceful performance than the members of SAMCRO. A certain restraint can be discovered in all three of them, whatever they are doing. Although a more direct, active, unyielding way to perform would be more appropriate, their body movement and gestures stay gallant. It can be claimed that their embodied performance is a very female one and so they are good examples of how even ‘strong’ women are restricted to their sex and have to follow certain principles of society. “It is problematic to assume that males or females think, learn, and/or perform in particular ways simply as a result of being male or female […]. Social pressure to perform in certain gendered ways can act forcefully against an individual’s biology” (Migdalek 2015: 11). Since Game of Thrones (2012-2013), American Horror Story: Coven (2013) and Sons of Anarchy (2008-2009) are very famous and popular TV-series, which reach a broader audience, Cersei, Fiona and Gemma set them an example of how a woman has to perform (stereotypically) female.

It can be argued that many performance arts practitioners are guilty of unknowingly reinforcing and reinscribing inherent gendered ideologies in the way that we/they teach, cast, direct, and choreograph (and design for) male and female bodies, and that these practices have a forceful impact on our/their student’s and audiences’ understandings of gender. (Migdalek 2015: 7)

It is almost necessary and at least expected from them to perform stereotypically female, because “embodied performances that oppose hegemonic gendered norms are perceived as indicators of homosexuality” (Migdalek 2015: 8), which contradict their image of the heterosexual, traditional mother they are supposed to present. Migdalek suggests that “[i]ndividuals should not be unequal of their embodied performance of
gender do not align to socially prescribed norms. Yet, those who pose, repose, and embody differently from gendered norms are marked as different or ‘other’” (Migdalek 2015: 8). Needless to say, after all the information given in the previous chapters, Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are maybe presented ‘different’ to many other female roles on screen through certain techniques of mise-en-scene, but are just another example of stereotypically female, discriminated women and mothers, who are in an inferior position in contrast to their male counterparts. Men would probably perform in a more effective, direct and determined way, while female performances are restricted to its appearance. Migdalek points out that:

“[… ] females who posed or strutted in masculine ways by talking more space and assuming broader poses – both in media and in the everyday – were seen as improper and for the most part as proffering sex, just as males who posed or strutted in feminine ways were seen as socially weak or queer.” (Migdalek 2015: 13)

Cersei, as the queen of Westeros, Fiona, as the supreme of the coven, and Gemma, as the wife of SAMCRO’s leader, represent high positions in the hierarchy of their series. Therefore, it has to be taken into consideration that they are even supposed to perform in a stereotypically female way in order to be seen as proper female ‘leader’. Ironically, this means not to act strongly, engagingly and in a competence-oriented way, so women have to please others by performing gracefully instead of strongly in order to be taken serious. Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are unfortunately no exceptions, although the audience might have guessed so at first appearance, due to the correct camera angle, lightning, colors and clothes. “It is impossible not to take into account cultural influences such as the media and popular culture when contemplating ways in which individuals might choose, be inspired, or come to embody.” (Migdalek 2015: 19)
5) Conclusion

Sexual discrimination is maybe harder to detect than it was years ago, but it is still an severe issue in our society. Popular TV-series, watched by a broad audience, present women in a powerful way through certain techniques of mise-ën-scene. Directors use lights, colors, camera angles and certain clothes to let them appear strong, mighty and even threatening and intimidating. If viewers rely on what they literally see on screen without questioning it, they will get the impression of an independent woman, who has equal powers like their male counterparts. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Despite their appearance on screen, women are still in the inferior position and far away from treated equally. The examples of Cersei (Game of Thrones 2012-2013), Fiona (American Horror Story: Coven) and Gemma (Sons of Anarchy 2008-2009) are proof of how female roles are – on the narrative level – sexually discriminated, weak, vulnerable and dependent. None of them possess actual power, although they are in higher positions. Stereotypes and prejudices are dominating their role and are a contradiction to the women’s appearance. Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are representatives for many other female characters of movies or TV-series and illustrate inequality and injustice. Instead of using their authority and position legitimately, like the male roles around them do, they are supposed to act manipulatively and doubtfully in order to reach their goals. Their criminal actions are then considered to be even more negative and morally reprehensible, while the terrible behavior of men often seems to be ignored entirely. In fact, Cersei, Fiona and Gemma are victims of violence and abuse and do not have many opportunities to defend themselves. In order to protect their family, they have to sacrifice and accept a lot. They are left alone with the mothering of their children, because men do not care about them or are not even around at all. The three described women are in fact traditional mothers and reinforce this stereotype. Moreover, despite their appearance and performances, Cersei, Fiona and Gemma illustrate embodied performances of femininity, which means a predominance of restraint, passiveness and gracefulness. This puts another emphasis on women’s stereotype of being appearance-oriented, instead of competence-oriented. To sum up, it can be said that the audience of a popular TV-series must not thoughtlessly take for granted what they see on screen. It is necessary to be aware of the many elements which are responsible for the creation of single shots and, as a result, whole scenes,
episodes and seasons. Afterwards, viewers have to take into consideration the narrative level and may give it a second look. It is worrying how directors and producers camouflage sexual discrimination behind camera movement and props, so viewers should watch series more consciously and critically in order to avoid the highlighting of prejudices and stereotypes, which leads to sexism and sexual discrimination.
6) References

6.1) Primary Sources:

*American Horror Story: Coven*. 2013. Created by FX. Produced by Murphy, R.; Falchuk, B. Twentieth Century Fox.


6.2) Secondary Sources:


7) References of Images

https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/c0/fa/c2/c0fac21974b21c0e6650e1c59df7728e.jpg (26th of February, 2016)

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9) Curriculum Vitae

Name und Geburtsdatum

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Geboren am 21.07.1990 in Wien (A)

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Ausbildung

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März 2013  Fachbezogenes Praktikum im Unterrichtsfach Psychologie/Philosophie

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April 2015 – September 2016  Fluggastbetreuung bei Alltours Flugreisen gmbh. (Teilzeit)

Okt. 2015 –  Betreuer im Kinderwohnheim Zirkelweg (geringfügig)